AN (EYE) OPENING CEREMONY

Posted on July 27, 2024 by Eddie

Frankly, if you are more bothered by a silly tableau in the opening ceremony than you are by the abuse of hundreds of thousands of children who are created in the image of god, then you are missing something significant.
Category: Observations

Last night was the opening ceremony for the 2024 Olympics in Paris. It's fair to say that opinion was divided about how well the whole thing went. Personally, I enjoyed the athletes' parade in boats down the Seine; it made a nice change from the usual walk around a stadium. Celine Dion sung magnificently; especially given her health problems and the Minions were wonderful.

However, there was one tableau in the middle which I found rather strange, when a group including drag queens appeared to imitate Leonardo's Last Supper (see above). It's hard to understand the motivation behind this piece. My suspicion is that the producers (those doing the *mise en Seine* - sorry) thought that it would be funny, after all the Minions had just mocked another Leonardo masterpiece. It probably occurred to them that some Christians might get offended by the show, but I suspect that in *La France Laique* they didn't worry about that.

So what did I think of it? Well, I found it offensive, I also found it childish. It seemed like a sixth form school play where the pupils were trying to get away with something offensive, but not sure how to really do it well. Hopefully, they'll grow out of it!

But hang about; take a look at this article from the Guardian.

> *The report found an estimated 216,000 children were victims of sexual violence by French Catholic priests, deacons and other clergy from 1950 to 2020. When lay members of the Church, such as teachers and catechism supervisors, were included, the figure rose to at least 330,000 children sexually abused over 70 years.*

Have you got that? A third of a million children abused by adults in the Church over 70 years. That is horrendous. While I retain my right to be offended, I can fully understand why people in France might see Christianity in a negative light. Frankly, if you are more bothered by a silly tableau in the opening ceremony than you are by the abuse of hundreds of thousands of children who are created in the image of god, then you are missing something significant.

Yes, we have a right to be offended, but we also need to stop and think about why some people might be so keen to offend us in the first place. Much of the Christian reaction that I've seen online seems to be more or less devoid of self-reflection or understanding.

OK, with that in mind, I still think it was a stupid thing for the organisers to do. French has a secular constitution, it has very little, if any, place for religion in public life. However, this ceremony was supposed to be welcoming people from across the world, people from countries where religion is extremely important. The parody, or mockery of Jesus is offensive to Christians and Muslims and that includes huge numbers of the athletes from countries outside of Europe.

Bienvenue en France: I don't think so.