

Is This Seafood Commercial Really Blasphemous?

Quiz: Are these tag lines from Comedy Central, a commercial ad campaign or the church on your corner?

- “Moses split the Red Sea. We split lobster tails and drizzle melted butter on them.”
- “In our book, gluttony isn’t a sin, it’s a commandment.”
- “Presbyterians will give you a sermon. Pescatarians will give you a salmon.”

Ding! Ding! Ding!

If you said ad campaign, you may be one of the people laughing at the 30-second TV commercials now running in Boston, home of the East Coast’s Legal Sea Foods restaurant chain, and posted at the chain’s Pescatarian religion spoof website.

Legal Sea Food’s New York ad agency, DeVito/Verdi, created the campaign, which launched July 6, using religion themes to urge people to “convert” to being a Pescatarian, the term for those who eat fish and seafood but shun meat and poultry.

Roger Berkowitz, the chief executive of Legal Sea Foods, told The Boston Globe he was the “high priest” of fish-eaters and loved “the idea that we’re elevating seafood to a religious experience.”

The chain’s press release, sardine-packed with pescatarian puns, listed all the ad vehicles, including a “Salmon is my co-pilot” bumper sticker and a website with a playful pescatarian creed and famous adherents (Noah?). The release quotes an altar call from Berkowitz, who’s Jewish, saying he hopes “people take this campaign in the ‘spirit’ in which it was created, so to speak.”

“It’s a tongue-in-cheek campaign,” said Kelly Durcan, a

spokesman for DeVito/Verdi. Of course, he added, “not everyone takes it that way. We hear some people find it funny but we mainly get complaints that it’s more or less blasphemous.”

A writer for Forbes, Will Burns, called it funny but risky.

So far, *The Boston Globe* hasn’t noted any complaints from area churches.

Neither has the Archdiocese of Boston’s publication, *The Pilot*. The archdiocese spokesman could not be, er, fished out of important meetings for comment on Tuesday.

Neither is the campaign exactly going viral. The YouTube video showing the TV spots has 1,205 views. A search of the most likely followers—#pescatarian on Twitter—led to restaurant tips, recipe links and some yummy food photos, but no readily apparent outcry from religious people or groups offended by the campaign.

Sticking a fork in the eye of advertising conventions is a familiar act at Legal Sea Foods.

In 2012, the chain advertised a “Jesus fish” and claimed that dining at its restaurants is a “religious experience.”

In 2008, local transit workers were not enchanted when the Green Line trolleys sported restaurant ads such as “This conductor has a face like a halibut.”

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