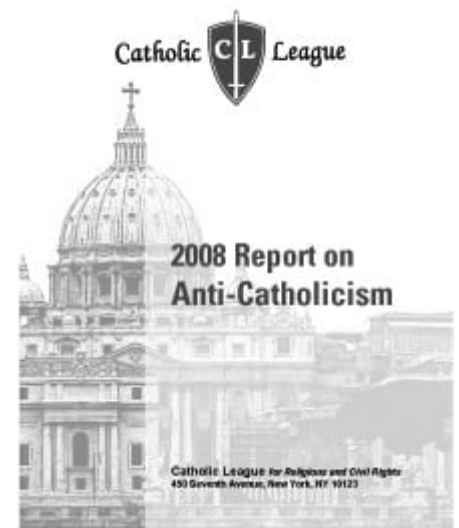


Activist

Activist Organizations



January

Americans United for Separation of Church and State criticized a resolution introduced by Virginia Congressman, Randy Forbes. The resolution would support a designated week each May for “the appreciation of and education on America’s religious faith.” Americans United faulted the resolution for “meddling in religious issues.”

January 15

Tuscaloosa, AL – The Tuscaloosa City schools suspended the screening of a Christian film due to pressure from Americans United for Separation of Church and State. The film was about a small, losing football team that turned its fortunes around by being urged to “give their best to God.” Americans United called for the film to be banned and argued that the film was overtly Christian and violated the First Amendment.

February 5

The Christian Anti-Defamation Commission bashed Pope Benedict XVI for “political correctness.” This came on the heels of the announcement that the pontiff was to rewrite a Good Friday prayer for the Traditional Latin Mass, removing negative references to Jews.

February 26

Hudsonville, MI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation asked Mayor Don Van Doeselaar to remove the words “strive to serve God,” from the city’s mission statement. They argued that those words violated the separation of church and state. Van Doeselaar turned down the request from the organization.

February 27

Emsworth, PA – Americans United for Separation of Church and State challenged a federal grant to the Holy Family Institute saying that it violated the separation of church and state. The Institute, which serves as a child welfare agency, said that no student is required to participate in religious activities and only brings clergy to those who request it. Holy Family had received government funding for 100 years and provides care to children who are removed from abusive households. It also provides family counseling so that at-risk children won’t have to be removed from their homes.

February 28

Greece, NY – Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued the town council and its supervisor because it opened its public sessions with a Christian prayer. According to the organization’s press release “the practices of favoring Christian clergy and prayers at Town Board meetings...convey the message that the Christian religion is favored or preferred by the Town over other religions and over nonreligion.”

March

San Diego, CA – The San Diego Chapter of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (a group of gay men dressed as nuns) held “Sisters Saturday Night Mass” to raise money for their charities. The chapter, The Asylum of the Tortured Heart, also held a “Midnight Confessional Contest” where the “hottest” confession won prizes.

March 7

Round Rock, TX – Americans United for Separation of Church and

State settled a lawsuit involving a policy that allowed students in the Round Rock Independent School District to vote on prayer at graduation ceremonies. The settlement followed a ruling that found the Constitution prohibits public schools from holding student votes on whether or not to allow prayer at graduation. Americans United said its "goal all along was to prevent students from being subjected to religious exercise based on the will of the majority."

March 11

Annapolis, MD – The Military Religious Freedom Foundation opposed the resumed dipping of the American flag before an altar cross during Sunday services at the Naval Academy chapel. The activist organization claimed the practice violated the separation of church and state. The practice was suspended in October 2007, but the suspension was lifted in recognition of its tradition.

March 23

San Francisco, CA – The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence held a "Hunky Jesus" competition on Easter Sunday. The contest featured contestants dressed as Jesus. Some of the contestants stripped naked, wore sex toys, simulated oral sex, told jokes and were spanked. One of the Sisters that emceed the event bent over in front of one of the contestants and asked, "What would Jesus do right now?" Another jokingly asked the predominantly gay crowd why they liked Jesus. He then gave his punch line, "Seven holes," and pointed to his "wounds," his mouth and his rectum.

March 23

Chicago, IL – The Catholic Schoolgirls Against the War protested the war in Iraq by disrupting Easter Mass at Holy Name Cathedral. During Archbishop Francis Cardinal George's homily, six people stood and shouted while squirting fake blood on themselves and surrounding parishioners. The protestors caused over \$3,000 worth of damage to the cathedral's property.

March 26

Everett, WA – A federal appeals court ruled that a monument of the Ten Commandments does not violate the Constitution just because it sits on public grounds near the Old City Hall. A spokesperson for Americans United for Separation of Church and State said that the “monument stands pretty much alone, and in that context, it presents a religious message.” The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals did not agree, especially because no complaints had been made about the monument in over 30 years.

April

West Pittston, PA – Local residents were mailed anti-Catholic tracts from Pastor Harold S. Day. The tracts include statements that the pope is the Antichrist, the Church and Communism seek to “enslave the world in bondage” and the Church is the “GREAT WHORE” with “many HARLOT daughters.”

April

Kentucky – A federal judge dismissed an ACLU lawsuit against Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. The Baptist facility was accused of using government funds to promote religion, following the termination of an openly lesbian employee. She was terminated because her lifestyle was contrary to the Christian values of Kentucky Baptist Homes. The judge dismissed the claims on the grounds that taxpayers do not have standing to sue over executive branch funding of faith-based agencies. The Thomas More Law Center provided legal assistance to the Kentucky Baptist Homes’ principal attorney.

In July the ACLU teamed up with Americans United for Separation of Church and State and urged the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to deny tax funding to Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. Americans United claimed that the Baptist childcare agency “has no right to accept public funding while imposing religious dogma on the children in its programs, and that the Homes’ religion-based anti-gay employment policy violates civil rights laws.”

April 15

Only hours before the Holy Father landed in the U.S., we issued a news release addressing dissident Catholic groups. These groups planned to greet Benedict XVI in their own way. The following is a sample of how these angry Catholics welcomed the pope:

- The National Coalition of American Nuns, a pro-abortion group, said the pope was not welcome in the United States
- The Woman's Ordination Conference played a game of make-believe by having women dress up like priests to say Mass
- DignityUSA, a group that once appointed gay rapist Paul Shanley its chaplain, staged a protest of Benedict XVI's visit
- New Ways Ministry, a pro-sodomy group, held a press conference on gay sex that no one attended
- Catholics for Choice, an anti-Catholic front group, hawked condoms: they'd like no one to leave home without one
- The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), a gang of professional victims greased by lawyers who have exploited the Church, wanted the United Nations to investigate the Vatican
- Voice of the Faithful, a group that flirts with bankruptcy, lectured the pope about Church finances
- Rainbow Sash, a gay organization, said it would throw ashes at the pope rather than confetti

Even though the Holy Father said he was "deeply ashamed" of predatory priests, and added that pedophiles would be rooted out of the Church, SNAP held a press conference in Washington, D.C. and criticized the pope for not doing enough. David Clohessy, SNAP's national director, stated that the pope's "soothing words and vague promises don't protect kids."

Along with these dissident Catholic groups, other anti-Catholic organizations protested the arrival of the pope. Among these were American Atheists who called the papal visit the "Vatican/Ratzinger agenda," and the Westboro Baptist Church who called the Church the "Great Whore."

April 16

San Diego, CA – The Jewish War Veterans challenged the transfer of a cross from the city to the Department of Defense in 2006. The opponents of the transfer saw the cross at the Mount Soledad war memorial as an unconstitutional religious symbol because it is on public land.

April 17

Detroit, MI – A coalition of seven organizations filed an amicus brief urging the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to rule against aid to churches that was distributed by the City of Detroit Development Authority in 2006. The coalition claimed that using public funds to repair churches violated the U.S. Constitution and threatened the independence of religious groups. The money was given to three downtown Detroit churches for repairs in order to spruce up their appearance prior to Super Bowl XL.

The coalition included: the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty; American Jewish Committee; Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America; the Hindu American Foundation; Americans United for Separation of Church and State; the Interfaith Alliance Foundation and Americans for Religious Liberty.

April 18

Fargo, ND – The Red River Freethinkers, a church-state separation advocacy group, filed a lawsuit seeking to remove a Ten Commandments monument on city property. The lawsuit was filed after the city denied the organization's request to erect its own monument near the Ten Commandments. The Freethinkers' monument would have said, "The government of the

United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion.”

April 18

Siren, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation called on Wisconsin Supreme Court justice-elect Michael Gableman not to attend a prayer breakfast hosted by the local sheriff’s office. The organization claimed that his attendance would violate the separation of church and state because of the sponsorship of the sheriff’s department. Gableman publicly stated that he would still attend the meeting regardless of any complaints.

April 23

Holmen, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation and the American Humanist Association planned on purchasing land from the town so that they could remove a cross that has occupied the area for more than 50 years. The Holmen Lions Club, which maintains the cross, planned to buy the land, but didn’t disclose its offer.

April 29

Soon after the successful visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States, Fairness & Accuracy In Reporting (FAIR) ran a report titled, “Pope Gets Pass on Church Abuse History.” FAIR claimed that during his reign the pope has been given a pass on his “record of downplaying the [sex abuse scandal].”

FAIR claimed that in 2001, before he was named pope, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger “sent a letter to church bishops invoking a 1962 doctrine threatening automatic excommunication for any Catholic official who discussed abuse cases outside the Church’s legal system.” The group cited an English newspaper, the *Observer*, to back up its claims. The accusation that Ratzinger had helped cover up the scandal was the same one we fought in 2003 when the CBS Evening News reported the same bogus story.

The document in question, *On the Matter of Proceeding in Cases of Solicitations*, did not apply to sexual misconduct—it applied only to sexual solicitation that might take place in the confessional. By sexual solicitation it meant “whether by words or signs or nods of the head,” the priest may have crossed the line. Because the policy was specifically aimed at protecting the secrecy of the confessional, it called for an ecclesiastical response: civil authorities were not to be notified because it involved a sacrament of the Catholic Church, not a crime of the state. Guilty priests could be thrown out of the priesthood and a penitent who told someone what happened had 30 days to report the incident to the bishop or face excommunication. In other words, the document detailed punitive measures for miscreants—just the opposite of a cover-up.

On May 2, we issued a news release that pointed out FAIR’s inaccuracies in the story. We noted that rather than do its own homework, FAIR resorted to a British tabloid to do its dirty work. Less than two weeks later, FAIR challenged our statement and stood by its original report. FAIR argued that the document could be read to include acts outside the confessional and cited a priest that failed to substantiate FAIR’s accusation.

May 10

San Diego, CA – The San Diego Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence held the “Sisters’ Saturday Night Mass: INKED, A Celebration of Tattoos” at Bacchus House, a gay club. The proceeds from the event benefited AIDS Lifecycle and the Sisters’ condom fund.

May 21

Baton Rouge, LA – The House Education Committee produced a bill that allowed Louisiana public school science teachers to use supplemental materials when discussing evolution, global warming and human cloning. Americans United for Separation of Church and State opposed the bill saying that it was an

attempt to legitimize teaching biology from the perspective of intelligent design.

May 29

Mansfield, OH – The ACLU asked a federal court to hold the Richland County Common Pleas judge in contempt for posting the Ten Commandments in his courtroom. In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the judge's poster, which he denied is in the courtroom, violated the Constitution. The poster that currently hangs in his courtroom includes the Ten Commandments and, according to the judge, illustrates a debate about philosophies that affect the handling of criminal cases.

June 9

New Orleans, LA – The ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State submitted an amicus brief to a federal appeals court urging them to rule against an amendment made to Texas' "moment of silence" statute. The word "pray" appeared in the amendment, leading these organizations to believe that Texas' mandatory "moment of silence" promoted religion.

June 13

Florida – A group of activist organizations, teachers unions and educational organizations filed suit asking the Second Circuit to block a vote that, if approved, would allow for school vouchers.

The ACLU, the Anti-Defamation League, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, People for the American Way, the Florida School Boards Association, the Florida Education Association and the Florida Association of School Administrators were among those who backed the suit.

June 18

Madison, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation wrote a letter to the State Assembly Speaker Mike Huebsch asking him to end the Assembly's 160-year-old practice of opening sessions with a prayer. The Foundation claimed that the

prayers often “proselytize and advance the Christian faith” and excluded non-Christians. The Senate’s prayer policy, which has been in place since February 2007, states that invocations should be *“two to three minutes long; non-denominational, nonsectarian and non-proselytizing; refrain from referring to specific deities such as Christ, Buddha or Allah; and to be apolitical and free of denominational appeal.”* (Our Italics)

June 19

South Carolina – Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed a lawsuit claiming that South Carolina’s “I Believe” license plate violates the First Amendment; the plate depicts a yellow cross that is superimposed on a stained glass window. Americans United claimed that the plate gave preferential treatment to one religion.

We noted that Americans United would have been opposed to a license plate for other religions as well. So for the organization to call the “I Believe” license plate “preferential treatment” for Christians is a red herring.

Two other groups complained about the license plates: the American Jewish Congress defined the plates as an endorsement of Christianity and the ACLU told the AP that the plates were an example of “the government’s underhanded attempts to endorse one particular religious viewpoint.”

On December 11, U.S. District Judge Cameron McGowan Currie ruled that South Carolina could not issue the license plates and that it had to remove information about the plates from the state website.

June 25

Minneapolis, MN – Archbishop John Nienstedt nixed a lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) prayer service at St. Joan of Arc Church. In the wake of his decision, Archbishop Nienstedt came under attack from several activists.

One local gay Catholic leader, David McCaffrey, said that

Nienstedt was guilty of “yet another volley of dehumanizing spiritual violence directed at LGBT persons and their families under [his] reign of homophobic hatred.” This was a remarkable statement considering Nienstedt didn’t take over as archbishop until May.

Even before Nienstedt took command of the archdiocese, radical gay groups were gunning for him. Just over a week before he assumed his new duties, Nienstedt was blasted by Catholic Rainbow Parents for giving “license to hatred and violence against all of us.” We commented to the media: “Lucky for people like them that American libel laws aren’t as loose as they are in England, otherwise they could have been prosecuted.”

June 29

St. Louis, MO – The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran an editorial on the papal appointment of Archbishop Raymond Burke to head the Vatican’s highest court, the Apostolic Signatura. The mostly favorable editorial ended with a startling paragraph that cited accusations made by Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP). The group charged that “dozens of proven, admitted, and credibly accused predator priests have been *welcomed* here.” SNAP also said that “there’s not a bishop in America who has imported so many pedophile priests into his diocese as Burke has.” (Emphasis is ours.)

We noted that no bishop “welcomes” or “imports” troubled priests into his diocese. What many do is treat priests for behavioral disorders at various centers. Two such treatment centers are located in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Neither of them is owned nor operated by the Archdiocese and were both built before Burke became Archbishop of St. Louis.

We waited for SNAP to provide us the evidence that the Archbishop “welcomed” and “imported” molesting priests into his diocese and it failed to deliver.

We called for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* to issue a public apology and SNAP to take an ethics course or shut down altogether.

July

Philadelphia, PA – On the city's website, a biography of a city commissioner stated, "She is a firmly committed Christian and seeks to have biblical principles govern her lifestyle and her decisions." When asked about this, a representative from the ACLU said that the bio was a harmless effort to humanize a city official and that there isn't a problem with it. When the Anti-Defamation League was asked what it thought, a representative stated, "It's outrageous and totally inappropriate and something we plan to challenge." When the official changed the wording to say that her Christianity governed her personal decisions, the ADL still objected and stated it would attempt to get any mention of religion deleted.

July 25

An ad criticizing the Catholic Church for its teaching on artificial contraception was placed in Italy's largest newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*. The "Open Letter to the Pope" was a work of Catholics for Choice and was signed by many dissident Catholic organizations.

We issued a news release calling to attention that some of the signatories of this letter had absolutely nothing to do with contraception. Among those were: Dignity and New Ways Ministry (gay organizations that object to the Church's teachings on homosexuality), Pax Christi of Maine (an organization focused on peace), Voice of the Faithful of New Jersey (a group founded to address the sex abuse scandal) and Women's Ordination Conference (a group for women's ordination).

We also mentioned that if it weren't for the Ford Foundation and other anti-Catholic members of the foundation establishment, there would have been no ad.

August 5

Chicago, IL – The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that taxpayers could not sue the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for incorporating religion into its health care programs; the Freedom From Religion Foundation filed the lawsuit. The organization tried to put an end to the Department's asking patients about their religion, its use of chaplains to treat patients and drug and alcohol rehabilitation that incorporates religion, but the court ruled that taxpayers couldn't challenge those expenditures.

August 11

Denver, CO – The Freedom From Religion Foundation posted a billboard with the words, "Keep Religion OUT of Politics" on it. The billboard was placed near the site where the Democratic National Convention took place.

August 13

Seattle, WA – The group Death With Dignity, a pro-assisted suicide organization, attacked several Catholic dioceses and organizations for funding the opposition to Initiative 1000, an initiative permitting assisted suicide. The group accused the church leadership of "focusing on politics instead of focusing on the families in their own neighborhoods." The reason for this accusation was because some dioceses contributed money against Initiative 1000 although they had lawsuits against them. We said that groups are free to disagree with the Church on this position, but to use intimidation tactics such as this was reprehensible.

September 2

St. Paul, MN – The Freedom From Religion Foundation placed a "Keep Religion OUT of Politics" billboard near the site of the Republican National Convention.

September 25

The Freedom From Religion Foundation said that churches that wish to engage in politics should give up their tax-exempt

status. This statement was in regards to the Church's opposition to Proposition 8 in California.

October

The president of Compassion & Choices—a pro-euthanasia organization—accused the Catholic Church of “relentless” and “ruthless” lobbying tactics in its opposition to Initiative 1000, a ballot initiative that would legalize doctor-assisted suicide in the state of Washington. When she was accused of Catholic baiting, she denied those accusations, saying that she was merely “naming a powerful political force and defending against it.” Supporters of the initiative claimed that the Catholic Church would be the initiative's “enemy.”

Catholic leaders said that Compassion & Choices was playing on “emotion, fear and anti-Catholic bias.”

October 22

Los Angeles Times writer Steve Lopez wrote an article claiming that Catholics were using God for an agenda in regards to Proposition 8. When citing the story of Father Geoff Farrow—a Catholic priest who was removed from his parish because he protested the Church's stance on gay marriage during a homily—Lopez wrote, “Speaking up for the dignity of gay people must be a greater sin than being accused of molesting minors.”

October 25

A deceitful letter by Jon O'Brien of Catholics for Choice was published in the *Washington Post*. In his letter, O'Brien said, “In Catholic theology there is room for the acceptance of policies that favor access to the full range of reproductive health options, including contraception and abortion.” This is flat wrong. The Catholic Church has always been opposed to both contraception and abortion. But we were not surprised that this pro-abortion, anti-Catholic organization would spread such lies.

October 25

The Rev. Daniel Kanter, a Unitarian, claimed that the Catholic Church “employs a measure of fear” to get Catholics to oppose abortion.

October 25

When speaking about the Catholic Church’s opposition to Proposition 8 in California, the Rev. Jonathan Tran, a Baptist, opined, “If the Church doesn’t tell us what to do with our ballots...and genitalia, who will?”

October 26

Coronado, CA – Opponents of California Proposition 4—requiring parental notification for abortions to minors—demonstrated outside of a Catholic church and singled out people who were going to Mass.

October 27

Americans United for Separation of Church and State stated that while tax laws don’t forbid religious groups to speak out on referenda (California Proposition 8), “it’s still deeply troubling to see three extraordinarily powerful faith traditions—the Religious Right, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) and the Roman Catholic hierarchy—throwing their weight around so blatantly on a sensitive civil rights and civil liberties issue.”

October 28

Cobb County, GA – Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the ACLU protested the ruling by the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upholding the use of prayers before government meetings.

October 28

In a post on his blog, musician Atheos called Proposition 8 “nothing but Bigotry—good ol’ Christian bigotry.” He then went on to accuse the Church of persecuting Jews and murdering people because of religious intolerance. He also accused the pope of assisting the Nazis.

October 29

California – Opponents of Proposition 8 sent out news releases singling out the Knights of Columbus for its support and contribution to the proposition. The contribution of the Knights was quite small but by flagging a Catholic group, opponents of the proposition threw red meat to anti-Catholic bigots.

October 30

California – The Vote No on Proposition 4 activists produced a video on Proposition 4 named “Therapy”. The video had two young men with opposing points of view sitting on a couch discussing the issue. The pro-parental consent fellow was depicted as making his case based on emotion, not evidence. Worse, he confessed that he was trying to “impose [his] moral view on others”; he also cited his reliance on the Bible.

November 2

San Jose, CA – “Bigots Live Here” was spray-painted on an SUV of a Christian family that supported Proposition 8.

November 5

Lynchburg, VA – The Liberty Counsel stated that self-identified homosexuals on a number of homosexual blogs, advocated violence against Christians and other supporters of traditional marriage. One blogger asked, “Can someone in CA please go burn down the Mormon temples there, PLEASE.” Another warned, “I’ve got a big list of names of mormons and catholics that were big supporters of Prop 8... As far as mormons and catholics...I warn them to watch their backs.”

November 7

Palm Springs, CA – An elderly woman was roughed up and the styrofoam cross she was carrying was smashed to the ground at a Proposition 8 protest.

November 9

Lansing, MI – A band of about 30 gays stormed a church in

Lansing, Michigan. Some were well dressed—as if they were legitimately attending the church service—and were stationed inside Mount Hope Church; others were outside of the building dressed in pink and black. The group of self-described homosexual anarchists, Bash Back!, claimed the evangelical church is guilty of “transphobia and homophobia.”

The protesters outside the church were beating on buckets, shouting “Jesus was a homo” on a megaphone and carrying an upside-down pink cross. Inside the church, the well-dressed protesters set off fire alarms, stormed the pulpit and unfurled a huge rainbow-colored flag with the inscription, “IT’S OKAY TO BE GAY! BASH BACK!” The church was vandalized, obscenities were shouted and worshippers were confronted. There were no arrests.

Bash Back!, a nationwide organization, had been planning on terrorizing the church for a month before executing their protest.

The facts were indisputable—all one has to do is visit Bash Back!’s website. There one could find that on October 12 and 23, a memo was sent to members of the group to commemorate the founding of “Michigan’s newly formed chapter” asking “Queers and Trannies” to join in storming the church. The group boasted that in 2008 there had been “an explosion in Radical Trans/Queer organizing,” citing progress that had been made from “Maine to the Midwest to The Bay Area.” Bash Back! was founded to fight “State recognition in the form of oppressive institutions such as marriage and militarism”; it says both are “steps towards heteronormative assimilation.” The radical nature of the group has led it to protest pro-gay marriage organizations like the Human Rights Campaign.

Eaton County Sheriff Mike Raines was able to identify the protesters, but unfortunately the pastor of the church did not want to press charges; therefore, the guilty got off scot-free.

This urban fascism was labeled by the left-wing site, the *Daily Kos*, as a “funny story,” and it conducted a survey on the subject. Only 19 percent thought Bash Back! crossed the line.

November 11

The American Humanist Association launched its “Godless Holiday Campaign” with ads in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. The ad read, “Why believe in god? Just be good for goodness’ sake”; the same ad appeared on Metro buses in Washington, D.C.

When commenting on this campaign, Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, said, “Morality doesn’t come from religion. It’s a set of values embraced by individuals and society based on empathy, fairness and experience.”

We responded to Speckhardt’s comments stating, “Codes of morality, of course, have always been grounded in religion. For those of us in Western civilization, its tenets emanate from the Judeo-Christian ethos. By casting this heritage aside, and replacing it with nothing more than the conscience of lone individuals, we lay the groundwork for moral anarchy.”

November 13

New Haven, CT – An envelope containing a suspicious white powder resembling anthrax was found at the Knights of Columbus’ national headquarters. The Knights donated over \$1 million to help pass Proposition 8 in California, but a spokesman for the organization said that there was no reason to believe that this mailing was related to that.

November 13

Denver, CO – The Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a lawsuit against Governor Bill Ritter Jr. for issuing National Day of Prayer proclamations. According to a story in the *Los Angeles Times*, the lawsuit is part of a campaign by the group

to overturn the 1952 law, designating a National Day of Prayer and mandating an annual proclamation by the president.

November 14

San Francisco, CA – Hundreds of activists swarmed a group of Christians who were singing and praying in the Castro District—a heavily gay area of town. Some members of the angry mob threatened to kill the Christian group. One woman was covered in hot coffee while another woman was hit over the head, pushed to the ground and kicked.

After law enforcement showed up, the Christian group was escorted through the screaming mob. One man was caught on camera saying, “We don’t want them coming back. Do you understand that, other Christians? Do you understand that, other Mormons? I’m talking to you, people. Yeah, you. Stay out of our neighborhood if you don’t like us. Leave us alone.”

November 17

Indianapolis, IN – The Indiana Court of Appeals ruled that the state’s “In God We Trust” license plates are constitutional. This decision upheld an earlier ruling against the ACLU of Indiana which claimed that motorists who asked for the “In God We Trust” plate get preferential treatment because they don’t have to pay an administrative fee for them. The court ruled that this plate is an alternative to the standard plate and that motorists don’t need to pay an extra fee for them.

November 19

Michelle Malkin wrote a piece in the *New York Post* highlighting the bully tactics displayed by gay marriage supporters following the election. She reported that the website *JoeMyGod* had a post stating, “Burn their f***ing churches to the ground, and then tax the charred timbers.” She also reported that vandals defaced a Christian church in California because its members supported Proposition 8. One church member had his car keyed with the phrase, “Gay sex is love” and “SEX.”

November 19

The Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) accused House Chaplain Daniel Coughlin and Chicago Archbishop Francis Cardinal George of wrongdoing during Coughlin's time in Chicago.

SNAP accused Coughlin of helping to conceal felonies during his time ministering to troubled priests. Although SNAP made the accusation, the group could not offer any evidence that the priest ever broke the law.

On November 20, SNAP claimed that Coughlin "oversaw pedophiles" during his time in charge of the troubled priests. Moreover, we said SNAP's comment that "There's no evidence that he [Coughlin] called police or warned parishioners about them" was too cute: SNAP had no evidence that Coughlin was ever in a position requiring him to call the cops or issue warnings about anything. SNAP may just as well have said there was no evidence Coughlin ever called the fire department about a church fire.

November 25

More than 60 organizations issued a 55-page report advising the incoming Obama administration on the need to provide more money for abortion-related services. "Advancing Reproductive Rights and Health in a New Administration" called for the most sweeping abortion-rights reforms ever envisioned. It not only wanted more money to be spent, it recommended a host of regulatory changes, stressing the need to appoint judges who will implement its plans. Significantly, it endorsed the Freedom of Choice Act, the most radical abortion-rights bill ever proposed.

From the very beginning, the pro-abortion industry has not only opposed any religion that is pro-life, it has adopted a confrontational approach. This document was no different. For example, in the section on "Comprehensive Sex Education," it explicitly advises, "Do not teach or promote religion." It

also launched a preemptive strike against a regulation from the Department of Health and Human Services that protects the religious rights of health care workers. The document recommends that Obama rescind the "Provider Conscience Regulation."

It did not surprise us that groups like the Secular Coalition for America supported this assault on religious liberty. But when religious organizations give their assent, it is troubling. Among the signatories were the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, Union for Reform Judaism, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations and Women of Reform Judaism; the anti-Catholic front group, Catholics for Choice, also signed the report. Evidently, their passion for abortion rights is so extreme that it eclipses any interest in the religious liberty rights of others.

December 1

Olympia, WA – The Freedom From Religion Foundation placed a sign at the Washington State Capitol rotunda—next to the nativity scene—criticizing religion. The sign read:

"At this season of THE WINTER SOLSTICE may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

December 2

Madison, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation placed its anti-religion "Winter Solstice" sign in the Wisconsin State Capitol.

December 8

Springfield, IL – The Freedom From Religion Foundation placed its anti-religion "Winter Solstice" sign in the Illinois State Capitol.

December 10

The French submitted to the U.N. General Assembly a non-

binding declaration that would decriminalize homosexuality. The Vatican opposed the document, citing its concerns over language that could impose same-sex marriage in law.

As soon as the Vatican noted its opposition to the declaration, its critics went ballistic. Italian newspapers branded the Catholic Church's position "total idiocy and madness," accusing it of being "obsessed with sin." Amnesty International weighed in against the Vatican and *Time* magazine branded Pope Benedict XVI "Scrooge" for resisting the French declaration. All of these boilerplate comments were off base.

When addressing the declaration, Archbishop Celestino Migliore, permanent observer of the Holy See to the U.N., made it very clear that the problem with the document was not that it seeks to protect homosexuals from being persecuted—the Church is obviously opposed to any such behavior—but that it opens the door to sanctioning gay marriage. His concerns are real: gay activists in support of the declaration already had said that this was the first step towards a binding U.N. resolution. And the problem with that is that it would ineluctably grease the slide towards gay marriage. As anyone who has seriously followed the gay rights movement would know, this is not a matter of conjecture—rather, it is part of the gay agenda.

After the Vatican declared its opposition to the French declaration, the reaction among gay activists was hysterical. The following are some examples of their hysteria:

- The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation said the Vatican "brushed off accusations of supporting violence against gay[s]"
- "The Catholic General leading the dirty war" on gays is what the Rainbow Sash Movement had to say about Pope Benedict XVI
- Peter Tatchell, an English activist, said, "The Holy See is so viciously homophobic" that it won't oppose "the murder" of

gays

- A San Francisco “alternative” media outlet, *beyondchron*, opined in a post that the “Vatican Doesn’t Care About Execution of Gays”
- The *bigqueer* blog said, “The Vatican doesn’t think that we should stop persecuting, or let’s just say, killing, GLBT people”
- The *daddydanforth* blog had a piece entitled “Vatican Thinks LGBTQ Are Criminals”
- The blog *ozwayssomething* accused the Vatican of “condoning those countries that impose the death penalty upon homosexuals”
- “Catholic Church Opposes U.N. Resolution to Stop Homosexual Executions” was a headline on *lesbianofcolornews*
- A story titled “Vatican Would Rather Gay People Were Executed Than Married” was posted by the National Secular Society

In addition to these slanderous remarks, three dissident Catholic groups condemned the Vatican: Dignity, Call to Action and New Ways Ministry. The anti-Catholic group, Catholics for Choice, also chimed in on the Church’s decision. All of the above maliciously distorted the Vatican’s position.

December 10

Wisconsin Rapids, WI – The Freedom From Religion Foundation complained about a publicly owned nativity scene in a local park. The city attorney stated that the nativity scene would not be removed because it was only a small part of the city’s larger holiday display.

Freedom From Religion Foundation’s “Imagine No Religion”
Campaign

The Freedom From Religion Foundation erected anti-religion billboards in numerous locations throughout the year. The words "Imagine No Religion" were placed on the billboards with a stained-glass window in the background. The billboards appeared in the following locations in 2008: Columbus, Ohio; Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; Denver, Colorado; Seattle, Washington; Phoenix, Arizona; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Rancho Cucamonga, California; San Antonio, Texas; and Canton, Ohio.

The organization also placed a full-page ad in the *New York Times* on September 9, just in time for the 7th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The ad featured a photograph of a pre-9/11 Manhattan skyline with the words, "Imagine a World Free From Religion."