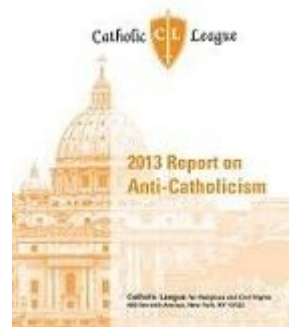


ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS

January 2 – October 16

Jackson, OH – The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) demanded that an Ohio school district remove a depiction of Jesus Christ that hung in the “Hall of Honor” in Jackson Middle School. The picture was a decades-old student initiative dating back to 1947. The district superintendent refused to remove the image unless ordered otherwise by a judge or the school board.



On February 7, the ACLU of Ohio and FFRF filed a lawsuit seeking a court order requiring the school to remove the picture and forbidding its re-hanging or any similar display in the future, claiming that the portrait was an unconstitutional promotion of religion in a public school. The district’s insurance company declined to cover litigation expenses. Faced with the potential costs of a federal lawsuit against the display, the superintendent of Jackson City schools made the decision to remove the portrait. “Obviously, the majority of people in our community wanted it to stay up somewhere in the school district. This all happened so fast, I don’t know that anybody has had the time to digest it,” said the superintendent.

The painting was moved to an art-room storage area where it was out of sight, but the plaintiffs were not satisfied. They argued that someone could still see the portrait. A settlement was reached in October that not only resulted in the school removing the portrait, but also paying \$95,000 to the ACLU and FFRF for damages and legal fees.

January 4

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the ACLU was opposed to federal funds for damaged or destroyed houses of worship. One ACLU official said “To rebuild houses of worship is a form of

compelled support for religion, which is exactly what the First Amendment is designed to protect against.” The Catholic League argued against this position. Bill Donohue wrote a letter to House Speaker John Boehner asking him to support the amendment to the Hurricane Sandy recovery appropriations bill that was introduced by outgoing Senator Joseph Lieberman. The bill said that damaged or destroyed houses of worship deserve federal assistance. Donohue also contacted FEMA chief Craig Fugate urging him to adopt a more inclusive FEMA policy that does not discriminate against religious entities.

January 7

Activists mobilized in response to Pope Benedict XVI’s annual Christmas address to the College of Cardinals with a petition calling for the Obama administration to designate the Catholic Church as a “hate group.” The individual behind the initiative claimed that Pope Benedict XVI’s defense of Church teaching on homosexuality and the family in his address implied that homosexuals are “sub-human.” The petition cited both the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League in arguing that the Church meets criteria to be called a “hate group.” The petition was added to the White House petition website, “We the People,” on Christmas Day. The goal was to reach a total of 25,000 signatures by January 24 in order to receive an official review from the Obama administration.

The petition did not reach its goal and was subsequently removed from the White House petition website.

January 18

Conway, AR – The Conway Public School District banned pastors and religious groups from visiting during the lunch hour, after the Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a complaint against the practice, calling it “predatory.”

January 22

Buffalo Grove, IL – The U.S. Supreme Court rejected an atheist activist’s final appeal in his lawsuit challenging the use of

state funds to renovate the Bald Knob Cross, an 11-story cross that stands near Alto Pass on Bald Knob Mountain, southern Illinois' tallest peak.

February 13

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, Americans United issued a press release effectively arguing that houses of worship should be discriminated against. Specifically, it urged the U.S. House of Representatives to vote against HR 592, a measure that would authorize FEMA to issue grants to churches as well as other religious institutions.

February 14

Dixie County, FL – A federal district court dismissed a lawsuit filed by the ACLU against Dixie County. The ACLU sued the county after it allowed a private citizen to erect a six-ton monument of the Ten Commandments at the courthouse.

February 15

Cincinnati, OH – An administrator at Purcell Marian High School was fired for supporting homosexual marriage on his website. A petition in support of the administrator was delivered to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. The Archdiocese did not budge.

February 19

The House of Representatives approved legislation allowing use of federal aid to rebuild churches and synagogues damaged by Hurricane Sandy. The ACLU was opposed to this measure. It wanted the government to discriminate against houses of worship, even though the hurricane did not.

February 20 – May 3

Monroe, NC – In February, the Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) sent a letter to Union County officials threatening a lawsuit because of the Christian prayers with which commissioners frequently open their public meetings. FFRF demanded that the commissioners stop their prayers. In May,

FFRF issued another letter with the same threat. An attorney for FFRF said, "This stays on our radar. If they do not change [in the coming months] we are considering filing a lawsuit."

Local residents were unfazed. Union County board Chair Jerry Simpson said, "I'm not aware of anybody in Wisconsin who voted for me [FFRF is based in Wisconsin]." Commissioner Jonathan Thomas said, "Nobody tells me how to pray."

March 3 – March 31

Austin and Dallas, TX – On March 3, American Atheists launched a billboard campaign which included two anti-Catholic billboards, one in Spanish and one in English. Both featured a picture of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI alongside the words, "The Church protected priests who abused children – *New York Times* (3/24/2010) / Fed up? So are we." The billboards also advertised the group's 50th anniversary celebration and convention, which ran in Austin from March 29 to 31, from Good Friday through Easter Sunday. American Atheists did not choose to have its conference at the end of Ramadan or Yom Kippur. Its billboard campaign and conference were created and timed to give offense to Catholics in particular.

April 8

Catholics for Choice wrote a letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius in which they grossly misrepresented who they are. The group wrote "on behalf of the more than 68 million Catholics in the United States—63 percent of whom support coverage for birth control in private or government-run plans, and more than 80 percent of whom believe that using contraception is a moral choice." This was a blatant attempt to subvert the U.S. Bishops in their defense of religious liberty in opposition to the HHS mandate by claiming a parallel magisterium.

April 11

Oceanside, NY – A contingent of gay and gay-friendly organizations, GLAAD, Dignity and Faithful America, descended

upon the Diocese of Rockville Centre's central administrative buildings to hold a press conference requesting that Nicholas Coppola be reinstated to the post he had held at St. Anthony's Parish. The protestors allegedly brought over 18,000 petition signatures with them, which they planned to present to Rockville Centre Bishop William F. Murphy.

Coppola had been dismissed from his voluntary positions at the parish after it was disclosed that he had "married" his boyfriend late in 2012. When the news of this case broke, Bill Donohue stated that internal Church affairs were not public business, and this applied to both outside advocacy groups as well as government agencies. Among those affairs are employment decisions. "Just as it is the right of a yeshiva to insist that its employees abide by Judaic strictures," Donohue argued, "it is the right of a Catholic school to insist that its employees respect Catholic teachings."

When the "protestors" arrived at the diocesan building, they were met by a security guard who took the boxes and promised to pass them on. It was discovered that two of the boxes were empty; the contents of the third box were so small it could easily have fit into a large envelope.

April 16

In a Huffington Post article titled "Fundamentalist Christian Monsters: Papa's Got A Brand New Bag," Mikey Weinstein, the founder and president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, made the claim that Christians in the military "terrorize their fellow Americans by forcing their weaponized and twisted version of Christianity upon their helpless subordinates in our nation's armed forces." The American Center for Law and Justice catalogued the terms he used to describe Christians in the military. They included the following:

- "monsters"
- "bloody monsters"

- “gangs of fundamentalist Christian monsters”
- “monsters who terrorize”
- “weaponized and twisted version of Christianity”
- “bigots”
- “stuck pigs”
- “senseless and cowardly squalling of human monsters”
- “evil”
- “bandits”
- “stenchful substances”
- “blinding bigotry”
- “hate groups”
- “hatemongers”
- “die-hard enemies of the United States Constitution”
- “putrid theology”
- “reign of theocratic terror”
- “oppression”
- “monstrously savage”

April 19

San Francisco, CA – The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, an anti-Catholic group made up of homosexuals who dress up as nuns, held an event called “Hunky Jesus: The Second Coming.” The advertisement included the following: “Wanna try and win that crown of thorns?” It advised contestants to “please keep your Holy Grail tucked inside that loin cloth.” The event was a clear attack on Catholics and had been originally scheduled for Easter.

April 23

Mikey Weinstein, president of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, met with several military leaders at the Pentagon “to express his concerns on religious issues in the military.” On April 16, Weinstein had published a piece in the Huffington Post in which he said he is fighting “incredibly well-funded gangs of fundamentalist Christian monsters” who force “their weaponized and twisted version of Christianity upon their helpless subordinates in our nation’s armed forces.” The

meeting and article came at a time of reports claiming that Defense Department policy against “proselytism” would put Christians at risk of facing court martial for sharing their religious beliefs. At issue was uncertainty over what constitutes “proselytism” and what constitutes freedom of religious speech. Activists exploited this issue in their attempt to ban Christianity from the armed services altogether.

May 8

Kountze, TX – A state district court ruled that no law “prohibits cheerleaders from using religious-themed banners at school sporting events.” The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) had argued that banners used by cheerleaders at Kountze High School football games were unconstitutional because they contained Bible verses, thus advocating a particular religion. This marked the conclusion of a legal battle initiated by FFRF. This was a victory for religious liberty.

April 19

Jefferson City, MO – Missouri’s House of Worship Protection Act went into effect in 2012. It protects worshipers by labeling it a crime if a person “intentionally injures, intimidates, or interferes with any person exercising the right to religious freedom or who is seeking access to a house of worship.” In 2012, the ACLU filed a lawsuit in federal court on behalf of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), Call to Action, and the Voice of the Faithful claiming that the law was unconstitutional. On April 19, a district judge ruled against SNAP’s argument, and the House of Worship Protection Act was ruled constitutional. Thus, SNAP’s members who violated it could expect punishment. Furthermore, the suit was dismissed with prejudice, thus prohibiting it from being re-filed ever again.

May 31

Elmore County, ID – In the dining hall of Mountain Home Air Force Base hung a painting that included an image of a

medieval crusader in the background with a depiction of an Air Force officer in the foreground. The painting featured the word “integrity” and referenced Matthew 5:9, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.” Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) founder Mikey Weinstein called the Pentagon to demand its removal. He gave officials one hour to comply. The picture was gone less than an hour later. MRFF praised the action in a column called, “The Pentagon Most Certainly Is Listening to Mikey Weinstein.” MRFF also stated that the commander of the 366th Fighter Wing “told Weinstein that he will be ordering another inspection to rid his base of anything else like that in the dining hall.”

June 3

Cincinnati, OH – A lesbian teacher at a Catholic school was dismissed from her post after becoming pregnant via artificial insemination, thus violating the terms of her contract, which expressly stipulated compliance with Church teaching. She won a federal anti-discrimination lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, effectively punishing the archdiocese for exercising its autonomy.

June 3

Lake Elsinore, CA – The American Humanist Association sued the city of Elsinore for funding a monument depicting a soldier kneeling at a cross. The Pacific Justice Institute represented the city. In July a federal judge ruled in favor of the American Humanist Association and banned the city from constructing the monument.

June 14

The Hague, Netherlands – The International Criminal Court (ICC) decided not to investigate or prosecute Pope Benedict XVI. On September 13, 2011, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) had announced that it asked the ICC to prosecute Pope Benedict XVI, and other high ranking Catholic leaders, for “crimes against humanity.” The next day Bill Donohue wrote a letter to Luis Moreno-Ocampo at The Hague

detailing the fraudulent, dishonest, politicized, and anti-Catholic history of SNAP. The Catholic League's goal was to subvert SNAP's efforts, and the Catholic League won.

The ICC officially tossed the bogus complaint filed by SNAP and the Center for Constitutional Rights; the latter is a far-left-wing group that specializes in defending Muslim terrorists sitting in Guantanamo Bay. The ICC rejected the bid to even investigate the Holy See.

SNAP leaders Barbara Blaine and David Clohessy, both of whom have been involved in covering up for sexual abusers, claimed they were "neither deterred nor discouraged by this news." This was a major defeat for the professional victims' lobby.

June 16

Chicago, IL – A protest organized by the Rainbow Sash Movement and Gay Liberation Network was staged outside of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church on the 25th anniversary of the Archdiocesan Gay and Lesbian Outreach. They could be heard shouting outside during Mass, with cars honking in support of the activists. Inside, homosexual activist Joe Murray wore a rainbow sash and stood with his back to Cardinal Francis George, Archbishop of Chicago, during parts of the Mass. Cardinal George refused communion to Murray, who walked away displaying his empty hands. In retaliation, a comrade of Murray's, who had already received communion because she sang in the church choir, went up to take another consecrated Host and brought it to Murray, who later had the audacity to claim that he and his comrades were "bullied."

June 18

Rep. John Fleming of Louisiana had introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would protect the right of service members to believe as they wish as well as their right to express those beliefs freely. He said, "I have not gotten reports of attacks against other denominations, other religions. It's only a matter of time, though, before

that can happen. So far it seems to be a total attack on Christianity itself.” Attacks on Christianity were increasing at an alarming rate within the United States Armed Forces, and it was clear that the assault on religious liberty in the military was being led by activists, which Fleming described as “secular unionism.”

June 23

The Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) ran an ad in the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* attacking the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) for “discrimination” against atheists after BSA had lifted its ban against homosexuals. FFRF was particularly offended by BSA’s use of the words, “duty to God,” as well as the statement on BSA’s membership form: “The Boy Scouts of America maintain that no member can grow into the best kind of citizen without recognizing his obligation to God.”

June 29

Starke, FL – At the Bradford County Courthouse, American Atheists unveiled a 1,500 pound granite bench with atheist quotes and statements from the Founding Fathers in order to “complement” a monument to the Ten Commandments that was erected in 2012. The militant atheist group vowed to put up 50 more similar monuments around the country on public grounds where the Ten Commandments stand. The director of state and regional operations for American Atheists said, “True equality means all or none. Christianity has had an unfair privilege for at least the last 150 years. We want to level the playing field by stripping them of privilege, and bringing them to equality with all other ideologies.” The president of American Atheists called the bench “an attack on Christian privilege, not an attack on Christians themselves, and not so much an attack on Christianity.”

July 2 – 3

Austin, TX – With the pending passage of restrictive abortion laws and a second special session to address the legislation

convened by Gov. Rick Perry, pro-life protesters assembled in the State Capitol and sang "Amazing Grace." The pro-life protestors were heckled and mocked by abortion supporters who screamed, "Hail Satan." The phrase also trended on Twitter as news of the incident spread.

July 24

An amendment was proposed to the 2014 National Defense Authorization Act to add atheist "chaplains" to the armed forces. The principal organization pushing this idea was the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers. The president of this entity, Jason Torpy, claimed that it was unfair for Christians et al. to have chaplains, but not atheists. Torpy said chaplains are needed to serve the 40,000 atheists in the armed forces. His figure was wrong: the Department of Defense said there are 9,400 atheists or agnostics among the 1.4 million active-duty personnel. Given that there were five times as many agnostics as there are atheists, nationally, that means there were less than 2,000 atheists in the military, which means Torpy's figure was 20 times the actual number. Torpy's ploy was a familiar backdoor strategy. If atheists cannot censor the public expression of religion, they settle for contrived competition, thus hoping to neuter its effects. Torpy's organization was on record opposing Christmas concerts on air force bases, Christian war memorials, and nativity scenes on public property (his organization bragged about ending the "stranglehold" that crèches have). His group also supported anti-Christian billboards that compared Christianity to slavery.

July 29

The ACLU, the American Jewish Committee, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Hindu American Foundation, and Interfaith Alliance were signatories to a letter opposing Senate bill S. 1044, which was making its way through Congress at the time.

The bill would "direct the Secretary of the Interior to

install in the area of the World War II Memorial in the District of Columbia a suitable plaque or an inscription with the words that President Franklin D. Roosevelt prayed with the United States on D-Day, June 6, 1944." The letter was addressed to both the chairman and the ranking member of the Subcommittee on National Parks of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

The groups claimed that the bill showed a lack of respect for "religious diversity" and endorsed "the false notion that all veterans will be honored by a war memorial that includes a prayer proponents characterize as reflecting our country's 'Judeo-Christian heritage and values.'"

In November the bill passed a Senate committee, but had not been addressed by either house of Congress by year's end.

July 29

Concord, NH – The Freedom From Religion Foundation sent an open records request to Concord High School asking for documentation that allowed a woman to pray on school property. The woman was a concerned mother who prayed and recited Bible verses for fifteen minutes on the steps in front of the high school each morning for two years after two bullets had been found in one of the school's bathrooms. Although the school principal initially permitted the woman to pray, school district officials said there was no document giving permission to the woman to pray in front of the school.

The superintendent declared that the district would no longer permit the woman's prayers in the fall of 2013. However, she continued to arrive at the school each morning and pray silently. She has been joined in her silent prayer by several other people including a state representative.

August 2

Glendora, CA – A homosexual teacher at St. Lucy's Priory High School outside Los Angeles was wed to another man on July 1.

When the school found out about it, he was terminated. The school said that what its teachers do in private is not its business, but “public displays of behavior that are directly contrary to church teachings are inconsistent with these values.” These rules were not arbitrary: “These values are incorporated into the contractual obligations of each of our instructors and other employees.” After being fired for willfully violating the contract, the teacher threatened to sue. Meanwhile, an online petition calling for his reinstatement emerged. These efforts by outsiders were an attack on the autonomy of the Catholic Church.

August 5

Portland, OR – The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed a federal lawsuit against the Holy See filed by Jeffrey Anderson on April 3, 2002. The suit claimed that the Holy See was responsible for the conduct of a priest who had allegedly molested a young man in Oregon in 1965. Anderson contended that the priest worked for the Vatican and that officials there knew about his sexual exploits. The next day, Bill Donohue issued a news release stating the following: “Anderson’s crusade is malicious. He knows he will lose in court.” On August 5, Anderson told the Ninth Circuit that he was withdrawing his appeal of a federal district court ruling that said the Holy See did not employ the priest and was not liable for damages.

August 20

Oklahoma City, OK – The ACLU filed a lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of a Ten Commandments monument outside of the State Capitol building. The ACLU claims the monument has created a “divisive and hostile” state for many Oklahomans. The ACLU also says that the lawsuit is meant to “remedy the state monument’s impact on Jewish and Christian believers.” According to the ACLU the monument has “trivialized the religious meaning” of the Commandments. A Baptist minister was one of the plaintiffs suing for the monument’s removal.

September 5

Gresham, OR – A lesbian couple filed a complaint with the state because a bakery would not bake a cake for their wedding. The complaint sparked a massive reaction among gay activists. Ultimately, the Christian couple that ran the bakery had to close their business. They moved their operations to their home. The activists were relentless. They even started a movement on Facebook to stop the family from running the bakery out of their home.

October

St. Paul, MN – The Catholic Coalition for Church Reform, an organization comprised of dissident Catholic groups, sent a letter asking for the resignation of Minneapolis-St. Paul Archbishop John Nienstedt to the U.S. Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganó. The groups cite Canon law as the basis for their request, but fail to mention that their organizations expressly reject the teachings of the Catholic Church. In fact, the members of some of the organizations have been excommunicated by U.S. bishops.

On October 25, Bill Donohue also wrote to Archbishop Viganó to set the record straight. Archbishop Nienstedt has no offending priests in ministry and he has taken exceptional steps to ensure the integrity of the Archdiocese.

October 24

New York, NY – American Atheists opposed the display of the Ground Zero Cross at the 9/11 museum and memorial. The cross, two intersecting steel beams found in the wreckage of the World Trade Center after 9/11, became a symbol of hope and healing. American Atheists is now appealing a judge's decision to dismiss the initial law suit in March. In dismissing the case, Judge Deborah Batts said "The Museum's purpose is to tell the history surrounding September 11, and the cross ... helps tell part of that history."

October 28

The Air Force Academy has decided to make the phrase “so help me God” optional in its honor code. The honor oath was created in 1984 and is administered to cadets at the conclusion of Basic Cadet Training. The decision to make the reference optional came after the Academy’s Honor Review Committee met to consider a complaint filed by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF). MRFF President Mikey Weinstein is a frequent critic of Christianity in the armed forces.

November 5

Pismo Beach, CA – Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) has filed a lawsuit against the City of Pismo Beach over the prayers and invocations delivered by an unpaid city chaplain at the City Council meetings. According to FFRF the Pentecostal pastor’s prayers were sectarian in nature. The city is defending the pastor, saying that his prayers do not promote one particular religion.

November 15

New Concord, OH – The ACLU threatened to file a lawsuit against John Glenn High School and the East Muskingum School District over a “Good Shepherd” painting of Jesus surrounded by lambs that hung in the school office, where it could not be seen by students or visitors to the school. The painting had been donated in honor of a teacher who died in 1971 after serving the school district for more than 50 years. Fearing the costs of a lawsuit, the school board voted to remove the painting and donate it to a nearby Presbyterian church.

December

The ACLU filed a lawsuit against the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops alleging that a woman received negligent care when she visited a Catholic hospital in 2010. The pregnant woman went to the hospital after her water broke. She later claimed that she was never appraised of possible dangers to her health, and the option of choosing an abortion. The ACLU is suing the USCCB because it says the bishops’ conference is responsible for the Michigan hospital’s decision

not to discuss abortion as an option. The baby died shortly after birth.

December 5

Oklahoma City, OK – The Satanic Temple, a New York City based group, has filed an application to erect a “homage” to Satan outside the Oklahoma Capitol Building. The group is looking to counterbalance a monument featuring the Ten Commandments that already exists outside the Capitol. This is the same Ten Commandments monument that the ACLU filed suit on August 20 to have removed. A sketch of what the “homage” would look like included two young children smiling at a goat-headed figure below a pentagram.

December 11

Oklahoma City, OK – A few days after a group of Satanists filed an application to install a homage to Satan outside the Oklahoma State Capitol, the Universal Society of Hinduism announced that it was also seeking permission to erect a statue of Hanuman, the monkey king. The Oklahoma Capitol Building has been the source of activists’ scorn since a monument of the Ten Commandments was placed there in 2012. In addition to the Satanists and the Hindu group, the ACLU is in the process of suing for the removal of the Ten Commandments monument.

December 12

San Diego, CA – The Mount Soledad Cross has been a source of litigation and controversy for 24 years. After numerous lawsuits and court hearings, a federal judge ordered the 29 foot tall cross to be removed from the Mt. Soledad Veteran’s memorial. The ACLU has been fighting for the removal of the cross from the memorial since 1989. The judge who issued the order was given no choice by previous rulings and “appeared to choke up” while reading the decision. The judge granted time for an appeal to be filed. The ACLU is continuing to push for the cross to be immediately removed.



This Steve Sack was published in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* on October 13. The cartoon maligns traditional Catholic symbolism and accuses the Church's hierarchy of covering up abusive priests.

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