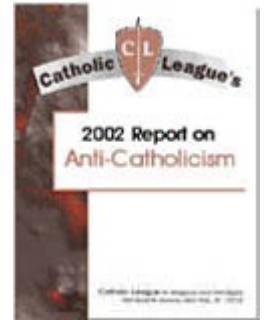


# Activist Organizations

## February 5

**Chicago, IL** – Americans United for the Separation of Church and State executive director Barry Lynn objected to the slogan on the side of the new “Patriot USA” coach launched by the suburban Chicago bus transit system called PACE. The full sized, red, white and blue bus was wrapped in a decal that featured the slogan “God Bless America.” Lynn told the *Chicago Tribune*, “The central problem with it is the assumption behind the phrase that to be a good American you must be religious.” The Freedom From Religion Foundation faxed a complaint to PACE, asking for the removal of the slogan.



## February 9

**Charlestown, WV** – Americans United for the Separation of Church and State objected to a sign outside Stonewall Jackson Middle School that read, “God Bless You.” The sign originally read “God Bless the USA.” AU executive director Barry Lynn said the sign violates the U.S. Constitution’s prohibition against state-sponsored religion. Lynn said, “At least if you put up ‘God Bless America,’ you can argue it’s a patriotic statement. But government is not suppose to take a position on whether God blesses you.”

## March 20

**New Orleans, LA** – National Organization for Women president Kim Gandy was scheduled to speak at her alma mater, Loyola University Law School. The local bishop, Archbishop Alfred Hughes, opposed the speaking engagement, citing Gandy’s commitment to abortion rights as contrary to the Church’s teachings. Gandy, in return, accused the archbishop of “urging my law school to do away with traditional academic freedom of speech and replace the free exchange of ideas with religious doctrine.” She added, “I imagine that Archbishop Hughes finds this flame-throwing a welcome relief from the heat of Church

cover-ups of pedophilia.”

### **March 26**

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) started an advertising campaign that shows the Virgin Mary breast-feeding baby Jesus. The inscription at the top of a billboard read, “If It Was Good Enough for Jesus...”; just below it read, “Breast is Best—DumpDairy.com.”

### **March 31**

San Francisco, CA — The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of San Francisco homosexuals dressed as nuns, celebrated Easter with an “Indulgence in the Park.” They featured a “clown-drag-nun” fundraiser and a “Hunky Jesus” contest. On Good Friday they had a “traditional observance of Very Good Friday” with “scantily clad men.”

### **April**

American Atheists issued a news release calling on the federal, state and local authorities to investigate the Catholic Church in connection with the sex scandal. They wanted the RICO law to be invoked as well. In a particularly vicious letter printed in the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Larry Darby, the Alabama state director of American Atheists, branded the Church a “totalitarian church-state government.”

### **April**

**Woodbine, IA** — The Iowa Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit against the Woodbine Community School District seeking to stop students there from singing “The Lord’s Prayer” at graduation ceremonies. The lawsuit said the song violated a 1992 Supreme Court decision banning prayer in public school. School officials said the song had education value and the students had a free speech right to sing the song if they so chose.

### **May 8**

**New York, NY** — The anti-Catholic group Catholics for a Free Choice held a press conference demanding that the United

Nations involve itself in the Church scandal. The group's president, Frances Kissling, once said it was her goal to "overthrow" the Catholic Church. Her group has been pressing to downgrade the Holy See's U.N. status as a permanent observer for the past several years.

### **May 9**

**New Orleans, LA** – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed suit challenging the way the state of Louisiana used taxpayers' money to promote sexual abstinence. The ACLU contends that Louisiana is allowing government funds to promote religion; it cites examples where a religious theme has been evident in some instances where the program has been used. Funding comes from the 1996 welfare reform law; states may receive block grants teaching abstinence in sex education programs.

### **May 10**

Rainbow Sash, a national organization of mostly gay Catholics, called upon the U.S. Justice Department to appoint a special prosecutor to determine if any federal laws have been broken by the Catholic Church in connection with the sex abuse scandal.

### **June 7**

**Minneapolis, MN** – Vernon Bellecourt, director of international affairs for the American Indian Movement said he understands the motivations for the arson and destruction of the 87-year-old San Diego Church in Tesuque Pueblo, NM while not condoning it. The blaze was set by a member of AIM who told investigators that Catholicism "ain't my [expletive] religion. It's a slave religion." Commenting on the arson Bellecourt said, "Our young people have been the victims of the most horrendous abuse by satanic nuns and pedophile priests" at former mission schools. "When you look at the history of the church continuing today, it does not serve the best interests of our people."

## **September**

**Canton, OH** – At the Stark County Fair, a group called “Former Catholics for Christ” had a booth. It included torn-up rosaries, a smashed statue of the Blessed Mother and anti-Catholic literature, including the charge that the Catholic group the Knights of Columbus was founded to overthrow the United States.

## **November**

**San Bernardino, CA** – Citizens Against Religious Zealots sent several postcards to the Catholic League. The group takes aim at many religions and religious figures, but none more than Catholicism and Catholic leaders. “Beware the Cult of Catholicism” appears on the back of one of its postcards. It also warns against “extremists” like the pope.

Another says on its front, “Don’t Let Them Go To Mass Alone.” On the back there is a drawing of two children with an image of a priest in the middle; on the bottom is the inscription, “Watch Your Kids.”

## **November 29**

**Pittsburgh, PA** – City officials changed parking signs near the display of a replica of the Vatican’s crèche in U.S. Steel Plaza after the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and others objected to the signs on the grounds they violated the separation of church and state. The signs had read “Crèche Parking.”

## **December**

**Crystal City, MO** – The organization Project Life published a pamphlet titled “The Silence of the Saints,” by its president, Ron Sutton. It asks, “Where was the Church when the Nazis were killing Jews?...Only a few spoke out...Many believe the Church could have stopped Hitler...Catholic bishops in Germany endorsed his regime...Things haven’t changed much. A host of religious leaders, Catholic and Protestant, passionately promote the right of ‘little Hitlers’ to murder unborn babies.”

## **December**

**Breaux Bridge, LA** – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) threatened the city with a lawsuit for allowing a local Catholic parish to erect a crèche in a public park.

## **December 12**

**Niles, IL** – The National Civil Rights Foundation, founded and headed by atheist Rob Sherman, filed suit in federal court to have a crèche removed from the lawn in front of the village hall. The display also included a menorah and secular symbols of Christmas. Sherman particularly objects to a figure of a man riding a camel (one of the Magi), which he said resembled Osama bin Laden. The village stated it would fight the suit.

## **December 15**

**Phillipsburg, NJ** – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of New Jersey objected to a 4' by 8' sign on town property that said "Keep Christ in Christmas." The mayor said that he would not take it down.