

# Executive Summary



Every year there is an issue that absorbs a disproportionate amount of Catholic League resources, and in 2006 that issue clearly was “The Da Vinci Code.” While many organizations from several faith communities objected to the film, no group did more to get the word out about the movie’s lies than the Catholic League. It was only fitting, then, that the media would give us top billing in leading the protest.

When the book by Dan Brown came out in 2003, I told the Catholic League staff we would do nothing about it. That’s because I respect the right of novelists to take liberties with history. After all, it’s done all the time, and almost everyone knows the difference between a story concocted for entertainment and an historical account of some past event.

This doesn’t mean that we would never object to a novel, but it would have to be something altogether unusual for us to do so. Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* proved to be such a book.

As an author of non-fiction books and articles, I do not have the time to read novels. But when it was announced that there would be a film version of the book—released by Sony, directed by Ron Howard and starring Tom Hanks—I knew that I had to read it. What bothered me more than anything in the text of the novel was the page at the beginning of the book titled “Facts.” Listed were three “facts” that were demonstrably false and defamatory of the Catholic Church. This led me to write a letter to Ron Howard on March 18, 2005 asking him to put a disclaimer at the start of the film noting it as fiction. He never answered me.

A year later, on March 6, 2006, we opened our campaign against the movie in the pages of the *New York Times*. We reiterated our appeal for a disclaimer. Brown, we said, has been trying

to have it both ways for years: at times he says his book "is a work of fiction," and at other times he says it is based on "historical fact."

Brown's first "fact" alleged that a secret society, the Priory of Sion, kept alive the story that Jesus and Mary Magdalene married. But in fact, this tale was exposed as a hoax that was made up in the 1950s by an anti-Semitic Frenchman (who was sent to prison for fraud). The second "fact" alleged that a "religious sect" called Opus Dei was an evil organization, when in fact it is a lay group that calls Catholics to holiness in their daily lives. The third "fact" was the most malicious: it claimed that the book was based on historical documents that show how the divinity of Jesus was forged in the fourth century.

Everyone is free to believe what they want about Catholicism (or any other religion), and novelists are free to offer conjecture about the past. But no one has the right to defame another human being, or an institution, and then lie about his sources. As to the bigoted nature of the book/film, consider that it was John Calley, the movie's co-producer, who admitted that the film was "conservatively anti-Catholic." It would be unimaginable to conceive of a single producer in all of Hollywood who would brag about his association with a bigoted film, unless, of course, it was a Catholic-bashing flick.

When the movie opened May 19, we were pleased that we had succeeded in getting our message across—the film is a fable (even "60 Minutes" did a segment on it and concluded it was a hoax). However, we had no idea that it would prove to be such an artistic disaster, and that most reviewers would pan it as a bore. Forced to see it, I branded it "inane." Referring to my experience attending the movie on opening day, I commented that "at the end of the film there were three or four people who clapped, and three or four who hissed. Most just walked out in a zombie-like fashion, eerily mimicking the characters on the screen."

While we did not succeed in persuading Howard to begin the movie with a disclaimer, we did succeed in persuading the public that the movie was a fable. We also scored a number of full-fledged victories in 2006, the most prominent being our year-end triumph over NBC and pop singer Madonna.

Madonna has a long record of offending Christians, especially Catholics. So when we learned of her "Confessions" tour, we braced for her latest onslaught. This time, it was her "Mock Crucifixion" that offended us the most. To the tune "Live to Tell," she donned a crown of thorns while hanging from a mirrored cross. It was purely gratuitous, the stunt having nothing to do with the song. I wound up telling CNN's Paula Zahn that "If she tried it with some other religion, she may lose more than her shirt." I added, "She certainly won't bother the Muslims, and I think we all know why that is."

After making an initial protest, we chose not to criticize Madonna everywhere she went on tour. But when we learned that she was taking her concert to Rome, on a Sunday no less, we restarted our campaign. It was just a little too cute performing two miles from the Vatican. Fortunately, Protestants, Jews and Muslims also protested her act. I said on the "Today" show that to portray herself as Christ on the Cross was "the functional equivalent of taking a middle finger and sticking it right in the face of Christians."

The final straw happened when we learned that NBC-TV planned to air the entire Madonna concert on Thanksgiving eve. Some Protestant groups called for the concert to be cancelled. We took a different approach. We told NBC to go ahead and air the concert, save for the "Mock Crucifixion" part. In the event our request was not honored, we would launch a boycott, but it would not be a conventional one.

Brent Bozell, president of the Media Research Center, and I had written a letter to NBC chief Bob Wright explaining the boycott. We informed him that only one corporate sponsor would

be targeted (a boycott of all sponsors was unrealistic), and that it would be randomly chosen the day after the concert aired. That way no sponsor would know in advance to whom we would deliver our Christmas present. Moreover, several other allied organizations had pledged to join us in the boycott.

On October 19, NBC issued a statement saying it would cut the "Mock Crucifixion" segment from the concert. Madonna, who previously said through her spokeswoman that NBC must decide between airing the entire concert or nothing at all, accepted the new terms. In other words, we won, NBC lost and Madonna swallowed her pride and took the money and ran.

The year 2006 also saw the Catholic League widely commenting on the behavior of Muslims, and media reactions to it. In the first part of the year, the issue was Muslim protests over Danish cartoons portraying Muhammad. At the end of the year, the issue was the reaction to the pope's speech at Regensburg University and his trip to Turkey.

Our reaction to the Danish cartoons controversy was twofold: on the one hand, we denounced the cartoons as inflammatory, siding with the U.S., Britain and the Vatican; on the other hand, we denounced the incredible duplicity of the media—it chose not to offend Muslims by refusing to show the cartoons, while continuing to air television shows, movies, cartoons and commentary that were offensive to Catholics.

The *Washington Post* chastised the European newspapers for demonstrating their "hostility" to Muslims. The Los Angeles Times declared that it "must take great care not to offend," never explaining why it was necessary to adopt a new strategy—for Muslims, that is. Similarly, the *San Francisco Chronicle* said something we never heard before: it announced that "insulting or hurting certain groups" is wrong (the cartoons posted in the online edition of the newspaper frequently insult Catholics).

The *New York Times* managed to top this when it opined that it was wrong to publish “gratuitous assaults on religious symbols.” What made this so special is that on the same day that Michael Kimmelman wrote a splendid piece on the controversy (comparing the Catholic League’s non-violent protest of the “Sensation” exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in 1999 to the violent Muslim reaction of 2006), the *New York Times* printed the offensive Virgin Mary portrait with the elephant dung and porn on it that was the focal point of our museum protest!

In September, Pope Benedict XVI drew a firestorm of condemnation for dropping a line about a 14th century Byzantine emperor who called attention to Muhammad’s violence. The pope’s address at Regensburg warned of the dire consequences that follow when faith and reason are uncoupled. Ironically, as if to prove the pope’s point, Muslims in many parts of the world responded violently to his remarks. Churches were firebombed, the pope was burned in effigy, calls to kill the pontiff were voiced, and a nun was killed.

Yet in the eyes of so many in the media, the pope—not the terrorists—was to blame. The Catholic League, along with Jews Against Anti-Christian Defamation, took out an ad in the *Washington Times* defending the pope and criticizing Muslim violence. Dennis Prager said it best when he blasted those who continue to criticize Pope Pius XII for not speaking out about the Holocaust (the pope did, but that is another matter) and who were now criticizing Pope Benedict for “confronting the greatest evil of his time.” He concluded, “maybe it isn’t a pope’s confronting evil that concerns Pius’s critics, but simply defaming the Church.”

The flap over the Danish cartoons not only showed the duplicity of the media, it showed the hypocrisy of the academy. Most of the student newspapers on the nation’s college campuses choose not to reprint the cartoons, and when one of them did, a competing newspaper struck back by

attacking Catholics.

The March edition of the *Insurgent*, a University of Oregon student newspaper, contained a large graphic cartoon depicting a naked Jesus on the Cross with an erection; there was also a graphic titled "Resurrection," which showed a naked Jesus kissing a naked demon, both sporting erections. The entire issue was laced with downright insulting fare—there were several cartoons of Jesus (including Jesus crucified)—all of which were released during Lent. That this occurred at a state institution made it all the more disturbing.

This explosion of hate speech was a response to a decision reached by one of the *Insurgent's* rivals, the *Commentator*, to publish the 12 Danish cartoons that so inflamed the Muslim world. An *Insurgent* editorial explained that because the *Commentator* published depictions of Muhammad so as to "provoke dialogue," they had a right to trash Christians as a way of provoking dialogue.

It was the tepid response by university president Dave Frohnmayer that motivated us to contact every member of the Oregon legislature, the governor, the state's three Catholic bishops, the president of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and the chancellor of the Oregon University System. While the damage could not be undone, we were pleased that concerned students on campus registered their outrage. We were also delighted that the national media picked up this story, much to the chagrin of Frohnmayer.

We had another battle in September on the campus of the University of Virginia when the *Cavalier Daily*, the student newspaper, printed anti-Christian cartoons. One showed a drawing of Jesus crucified on a mathematical graph with the inscription, "Christ on a Cartesian Coordinate Plane." The other showed the Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus. "Mary...I don't mean to ruin this special moment," Joseph says, "but how did you get that bumpy rash?" To which Mary says, "I swear, it was

Immaculately Transmitted.”

Our protest included mentioning how the same student newspaper had previously apologized to gays when they were offended. So we demanded equal treatment. After being bombarded with 2,500 e-mails and 50 phone calls, the offensive comics were pulled from the website of the student newspaper and a statement of regret was issued.

We spent a lot of time last year, quite successfully, combating draconian state laws designed to punish the Catholic Church because of the sexual abuse scandal that was exposed in 2002. We had no problem with laws that promised uniform application, but when it was discovered that the Catholic Church was being singled out, we struck back. For example, when New Hampshire legislators entertained a bill that would violate the Sacrament of Reconciliation—as if priests routinely learn of molestation committed by a church employee in the confessional—we protested its unconstitutionality. We won.

Colorado was the site of the most tenacious battle in this area. Early in the year, three bills were considered that would suspend the statute of limitation for child sexual abuse lawsuits for two years. The bills, however, applied only to private entities; public schools were purposely given a pass, even though they have the worst documented record of the sexual abuse of minors of any institution in the nation. The Catholic League quickly came to the defense of Colorado’s three courageous bishops: Archbishop Charles Chaput, Bishop Michael Sheridan and Bishop Arthur Tafoya.

We wrote to every member of the Colorado legislature protesting the inequity of these bills. If all institutions were equally blanketed, we would have no problem, but by cherry picking the Catholic Church, the lawmakers were showing their bias. After a struggle, we prevailed and legislation was introduced that would give no institution a pass. Immediately,

the teachers unions got scared and let their representatives know of their concerns. Thus did these bills die a slow death.

We were active in the courts, as well. We like to team with the Thomas More Law Center whenever we can—it's a good tag team. Our most prominent case is still pending before the courts: we are protesting the prohibition of crèches in New York City public schools, citing religious discrimination (menorahs are allowed). When the year ended, the U.S. Supreme Court had yet to decide whether it will accept this case.

On April 4, 2006, the Thomas More Law Center sued the City of San Francisco, and two local officials, on behalf of the 6,000 members of the Catholic League who live there. The suit was brought after the San Francisco Board of Supervisors unanimously passed a resolution that amounted to government-sponsored hate speech against Catholics. Just because the Catholic Church supports the right of children to be raised by a father and mother, and not by various other combinations, the Board of Supervisors called the Church's teachings on adoption "hateful," "discriminatory," "insulting" and "callous," adding that it "shows a level of insensitivity and ignorance." The resolution also accused the Vatican of "meddling" in the affairs of San Francisco. We lost the first round; the case is on appeal.

We also joined with the Thomas More Law Center in a case dealing with partial-birth abortion. The suit supports the ban and challenges the euphemistic language used by the pro-abortion industry. The other case, being fought for us by the Washington, DC law firm of Winston & Strawn, challenges a New York law that requires religious charities' prescription drug plans to cover contraceptives.

Monitoring television shows is an on-going part of our work, and in 2006 the show that kept us the busiest was the ABC show "The View." Joy Behar has long been a problem, but things got worse when Rosie O'Donnell joined the panel. Whether slamming

conservative Christians, ridiculing Communion, or making blatantly untrue comments about Pope Benedict XVI, O'Donnell made it clear that she is an unrepentant bigot.

On a positive note, we were happy that NBC dropped the comedy/drama "The Book of Daniel" in the same month that it debuted. It was nothing more than a hit job on Christians.

A potential showdown between the Catholic League and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) was avoided when a highly controversial issue that we addressed was quickly resolved. When word got out that a movie, "Facing the Giants," would be awarded a PG rating because it was "too religious," we contacted the MPAA and let our position be known. Indeed, we were relentless on this issue and did not let up until it became clear that no film was about to get a PG rating because of its "religious viewpoint."

Finally, the Christmas wars returned at the end of the year, though this time our side was on the upswing. Having defeated Wal-Mart the year before, the retail giant did a 180 and promoted "Merry Christmas" everywhere. Unlike previous years, when many Christians just complained, Christmas of 2006 was the year that many were mobilized. As a result, more victories were won last year than in previous years. We can lead, but we can't do it alone. And lead we did: an AP story in December featured the Catholic League as the organization that was front and center in the Christmas wars.

In sum, 2006 was an impressive year for the Catholic League. We don't win every battle, but even when we lose, we leave our mark. Most leaders, whether in the private or public sector, don't want to be confronted by advocacy organizations, especially civil rights groups. We don't start any of these fights, but we don't back off from them, either. There is too much at stake, and too many good Catholics who support us, not to fight to the finish.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

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# Activist



## January 16

**Madison, WI** – The Freedom From Religion Foundation posted on its website the following question about the nomination of Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court: “Are you aware that if nominee Samuel Alito is named to the U.S. Supreme Court, there will be five members—a majority—who are radical, right-wing Roman Catholic?”

## February 13

**Indianapolis, IN** – The Fairness Foundation waged a TV and radio ad campaign in Chicago and Washington, D.C. against Catholic hospitals. The foundation was critical of the billing practices of non-profit hospitals. During this time, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan was supporting legislation that would have mandated that non-profit hospitals tighten their billing and collecting procedures. Madigan also wanted to force these institutions to contribute more to charities, lest they risk their tax-exempt status. One ad from the Fairness Foundation said it was regrettable that the Attorney General had to get involved, “but as with other immoral actions,” it concluded, “apparently the church needs to be forced by lawyers to do the right thing, to be moral. How sad.” In May, a similar advertisement was also heard on a New York radio station.

## **February 22**

***Salt Lake City, UT*** – The Utah House passed a bill that allows for state and local governments to maintain, donate or sell property to groups “that want to place memorials including religious symbols in honor of public servants who have died in the line of duty.” The bill blocked an attempt by American Atheists Inc., to remove metal crosses from roadsides that honor Utah Highway Patrol members killed on the job. American Atheists claimed that the crosses with the Utah Highway Patrol logo violated separation of church and state.

## **March 5**

***Chicago, IL*** – In an address at the Nation of Islam’s flagship mosque, Nation leader Louis Farrakhan said that the “Roman Church” is “the mother of White Supremacy,” does not represent Jesus and uses Jesus’ good name to shield its dirty practices.

## **March 13**

***Oshkosh, WI*** –The Freedom From Religion Foundation attempted to block the erection of a statue of an angel in a city park. The group’s co-president stated that religious imagery such as angels does not belong on public property.

## **April 18**

***Toledo, OH*** – A U.S. district judge said a Ten Commandments monument could remain in place outside the Lucas County Courthouse, because it did not promote religion. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Ohio had sued the county in 2002 to have the display removed.

## **April 24**

***Los Angeles, CA*** – Lambda Legal, a civil rights organization that defends gays, lesbians and people with HIV/AIDS, asked the California Supreme Court to hear the case of a woman whose doctors refused to give her infertility treatment because she

is a lesbian. The doctors claimed that performing such a procedure went against their fundamentalist Christian beliefs.

### **June 3**

**Des Moines, IA** – A federal judge ruled that Prison Fellowship Ministries, a state-financed evangelical Christian program used in prisons, violated the separation of church and state. Americans United for Separation of Church and State had filed a lawsuit against Iowa prison officials and the Ministries. Americans United claimed that the faith-based prison treatment program was unconstitutional because prisoners engrossed themselves in Christian values.

### **June 28**

**Elkins, WV** – Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the West Virginia ACLU sued the Harrison County Board of Education, saying a painting of Jesus Christ hanging outside the principal's office sent the message that the school endorsed Christianity as its official religion. The school district was not going to fight the suit but, after private money was raised, changed its mind. After the portrait was stolen in August, someone gave the school, as a replacement, a mirror. The mirror had a brass plate at the bottom of it with an inscription that read, "To know the will of God is the highest of all wisdoms. The love of Jesus Christ lives in each of us." Both sides in the case eventually reached a settlement in October, without disclosing the terms of the agreement.

### **September 7**

**San Francisco, CA** – The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of drag queens that dress up as Catholic nuns, hosted an event called Revival Bingo. Among the features of the game are getting the bingo chips to make a cross on the card and "one finger bingo," where the winner must stick up his middle finger to indicate Bingo. Another feature of the event is when

one of the “nuns” yells out “Free s–t!” They then draw tickets from a bucket and winners get prizes, including pornographic DVDs and sex toys. A Revival Bingo event to be held in November, emceed by a drag queen known as Peaches Christ, was cancelled. Peaches hosted her own event called “Midnight Mass” throughout the summer and fall. Those events featured movies considered “camp,” along with guest stars and “drag spectacles.”

### **September 8**

**Atlanta, GA** – A federal judge ruled that the Cobb County Commissioners could continue to begin their meetings with prayers that invoke Jesus’ name. The ACLU had filed a complaint on behalf of several people, claiming the government was unconstitutionally endorsing Christianity by allowing the prayer.

### **November 2**

**Denver, CO** – Five organizations, including Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Voice of the Faithful, demanded that the Denver Archdiocese release “all church documents relating to clergy sex abuse.” The groups also sent a letter that contained a lie to Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput. In the letter, the groups misrepresented the Archbishop; they stated that he was against legislation regarding victims of sexual abuse. In reality, the Archbishop was in favor of such legislation; he only objected to the fact that private and not public institutions were included in this law. Only when public institutions were included did the legislation fail. If SNAP and Voice of the Faithful were really interested in protecting children, they would have agreed with Archbishop Chaput, instead of making false accusations.

### **November 6**

**Green Bay, WI** – Judge Mark Warpinski refused to recuse himself

from a sexual molestation case involving a Catholic priest. Activist Attorney Jeffrey Anderson demanded that Judge Warpinski recuse himself because the judge was Catholic and was serving on the Board of Education of Notre Dame Academy. Attorney Anderson has made tens of millions of dollars suing the Catholic Church. He has attempted to sue the Vatican and has called the seal of confession a "loophole." Anderson is also one of the most generous benefactors to SNAP, which had issued a press release on November 4, making the same demand of the judge as Anderson did.

### **November 9**

**Las Cruces, NM** – A federal judge dismissed a lawsuit that sought to stop the city of Las Cruces (whose name means "the crosses" in Spanish) from using three crosses on its logos. Plaintiff Paul Weinbaum said he had told the judge previous to his ruling that, no matter what the outcome, he would appeal. Weinbaum was also suing the Las Cruces schools on similar grounds. In 2003, Americans United for Separation of Church and State complained that Las Cruces using crosses in its logos amounted to an unconstitutional endorsement of religion.

### **November 17**

**Chicago, IL** – The Rainbow Sash Movement issued a response to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) statement on pastoral care to homosexuals. Rainbow Sash chose to attack the Church as a whole rather than just address the statement on homosexuals. The organization said, "To say faithful GLBT lovers cannot get married harkens back to [the] days of the Inquisition... Promoting discrimination against the GLBT Community flies in the face of Catholic Social Justice, and only further bankrupts the moral authority of the Bishops... Perhaps it is time for GLBT Catholics to rethink their passive roll [sic] and find more creative ways to create positive tension between our Bishops and the GLBT Community."

## **November 20**

**Philadelphia, PA** – A federal judge threw out a sexual abuse-related class-action lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Plaintiffs' attorney Stewart J. Eisenberg attempted to sue the archdiocese and its current and former archbishops under racketeering laws. District Judge Legrome D. Davis said the plaintiffs' claims did not sufficiently support a violation of such laws.

Simply suing the Catholic Church would not, per se, warrant inclusion in the Catholic League's Annual Report. This particular case is included because Stewart Eisenberg has a history of actions that only seek to make money at the Church's expense.

Additionally, Eisenberg knew that the Archdiocese of Philadelphia could not be sued for violating racketeering laws. He also knew that current Philadelphia Archbishop Justin Cardinal Rigali was not Archbishop when the alleged cover-ups of sexual abuse in the Archdiocese took place. Nonetheless, Cardinal Rigali was named as a defendant in this case. Eisenberg is an activist attorney with an agenda.

## **November 30**

**Washington, DC** – The American Humanist Association announced the opening of a legal center in Washington D.C. The group's first project was participation in a lawsuit challenging the location of polling places in churches. In one case, a Florida man complained that he had to vote in a Catholic Church and, in the process, walk past a church-sponsored pro-life banner framed by multiple giant crosses.

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# The Arts



## February 2

**New York, NY** – The Forum Gallery displayed a painting titled “Bread Shine,” which depicted several tiny figures engaged in sex acts beneath an industrial breadbox. A figure of Christ was attached to the breadbox as a decal. The painting was one of 30 by Gregory Gillespie that were displayed at the gallery.

## March 23

**Chicago, IL** – The play “Oh, Holy Allen Ginsberg, Oh S–t Sweet Jesus, Tantric Buddha, Dharma Road” opened at the Balliwick Repertory Theatre. The play is about the life of a gay Catholic priest named Gerry Gallagher. Gallagher has a lover who is a professor of English and an atheist. David Zak, the play’s director, had previously directed the musical “Pope Joan.”

## March 23

**New York, NY** – The play “Mary, Like a Virgin: a Divine Musical Experience” opened at Dillon’s Lounge. A transvestite played the Blessed Mother, whose character reveals, among other things, the “sometimes hazy details of her relationship with God” and “her struggle with eating disorders.”

## April 21

**Omaha, NE** – The SNAP/Shelterbelt Theater presented “Defending Marriage,” a play about a gay priest named Father Pat and his boyfriend of ten years, an ex-seminarian named Gene. In the play, the local bishop asks Father Pat to lead a ballot campaign for traditional marriage.

## May 20

**New York, NY** – An exhibit of the work of John Santerineross opened at KFMK Gallery. A photograph called “The Transformation of the Madonna” was displayed as part of the exhibit. An attendee described the photo, which is of a woman with her genitals cut and bleeding; there is a crucifix below the woman, and the blood from her mutilated genitalia is running into a wine glass.

### **June 15**

**West Chesterfield, NH** – “Catholic School Girls,” a play by Casey Kurttti, opened at the Actors Theatre Playhouse. Characters in the play include nuns that are tyrannical, flaky, or senile. Girls in the play are, among other things, punished for saying Jesus was a Jew. The *St. Petersburg Times* wrote, “A dark undercurrent in the play criticizes the Catholic school experience as sexually repressive, humiliating to women and fostering an unthinking obedience to authority.”

### **June 16**

**Fort Lauderdale, FL** – The Bill C. Davis play “Mass Appeal” opened at the Sol Theatre. The play is about a parish priest who tells parishioners what they want to hear in order to maintain his luxurious lifestyle. The priest advises a seminarian, “If you want to become a priest, lie.” Playwright Davis is also the author of the anti-Catholic play “Avow.”

### **June 20**

**Berkeley, CA** – “Bigger Than Jesus,” a play by Rick Miller, opened for six performances at the University of California-Berkeley. In the play, Jesus criticizes the pope as an old man claiming to make infallible statements. Playwright Miller has described himself as a Catholic who “lapsed more than half a lifetime ago.”

### **June 24**

**Miami, FL** – An exhibit called “Here I Sit” opened at the Faktura Gallery. The exhibit featured toilet seats that were painted and collaged. One of the pieces was a work titled “Holy S–.” The toilet seat in this piece had a collage of pages from children’s prayer books. A picture underneath the lid of the seat showed a priest’s hands breaking the Host in half. Angela Roell, the artist, has been described in the *Miami New Times* as a lapsed Catholic.

## **July 6**

**Munster, IN** – The musical “Do Black Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up?” by John Powers opened its five-week run at the Theatre at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts. The work features parodies of nuns and Catholic school students and trivializes the Sacrament of Confession.

## **July 21**

**Seattle, WA** – The play “Mitzi’s Abortion” opened at the ACT Theatre. The main character, Mitzi, is unsure of whether she wants to abort her baby. She seeks advice from St. Thomas Aquinas, who says, “This inane position that the Church has taken lately which gives an embryo moral standing as a human person from the moment of conception! It’s ludicrous. But these puppies are eating it up like kibble!”

## **August 11**

**Chicago, IL** – Oracle Productions presented “Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You.” The play by Christopher Durang features a vicious nun who rails against her dysfunctional students, derides the teachings of the Catholic Church, attacks Jesus and disparages the Virgin Mary.

## **August 15**

**New York, NY** – “Kiki & Herb: Alive on Broadway” opened at the Helen Hayes Theatre. The Associated Press said of the play,

“Catholics routinely come in for a thrashing, as do Republicans and anti-gay advocates.” The play claims that Nazis run the Catholic Church and “the devil really does wear Prada”; the devil in this case was the pope.

### **September 6**

**Philadelphia, PA** – A dance production called “The Convent” opened in Philadelphia. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the nun characters “play nasty practical jokes, sing songs, perform religious rituals, experience spiritual ecstasy, and beat one another up.”

### **September 29**

**Hollywood, CA** – A musical called “The Beastly Bombing” opened at the Steve Allen Theater at the Center for Inquiry-West. In the musical, a boy-crazy Catholic prelate makes a guest appearance, as does Jesus, who dances with the President.

### **October 10**

**Chicago, IL** – A touring production of the musical “Altar Boyz” opened at the LaSalle Bank Theatre. The show is about a boy band that sings “Christian themed” songs that actually ridicule Christianity. In one song, the gay band member sings, “Your posse might not think it’s dope/If you confess you like the pope.” The choreography in “Altar Boyz” sometimes involves the group striking poses making believe they are crucified.

### **November 16**

**New York, NY** – An exhibit by the artist Kiki Smith opened at the Whitney Museum of American Art. One of the pieces, titled “Virgin Mary,” is a female figure stripped of her skin, with her tissues and muscles exposed. Another exhibit features Mary Magdalene growing fur on her body.

### **November 17**

**Dallas, TX** – The play “Jesus Hates Me,” by Wayne Lemon, opened at the Kitchen Dog Theater. The play is about a 20-year-old former high school football star named Ethan who lives with his mother on the seventh hole of a bible-themed miniature golf course. At one point in the play, the protagonist rages against Jesus, “You died for nothing. No? Then show me... you uncaring f-!” According to the alternative Denver weekly *Westword*, also included in the play was a “Wal-Mart mannequin Jesus hanging on his cross, sporting a party hat and a ‘F- off Ethan’ banner.”

### **December 15**

**New York, NY** – The play “Jackie Beat: How the Bitch Stole Christmas” opened at the Cutting Room. Jackie Beat is a drag queen who has been performing Christmas-themed shows for nine years. Press notes for this play included the following: “It all started innocently in 1998 with ‘Jesus Christ, It’s Your Birthday!,’ a delightful non-denominational holiday tribute featuring such seasonal fare as ‘Sleigh Ride in Leather With You,’ and ‘Black Christmas.’ When the show was prominently featured in The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Right’s *1998 Report on Anti-Catholicism*, an annual holiday tradition was born.”

### **December 18**

**New York, NY** – The Catholic League was informed of two art displays in the storefront windows of the Exit Art gallery. One display had two skeleton figures dressed like popes, and another figure made to look like Pope Benedict XVI with a menacing look on his face. There was also a life-sized teddy bear dressed as a priest. They were standing over a female mannequin dressed as an altar boy; she was lying on what looks like an altar. The title of this piece was “Bearing of the Cross” by Peter Caine. The other display by the same artist was of a scarecrow on a cross, with Ku Klux Klansman standing below him. In this display, titled “The Crucifixion,” there

was also a skeleton figure made to look like an angel. Displaying these works exhibits a pattern: of all the displays that Exit Art could have shown during Christmas, it decided on these two.

## **December 21**

*New York, NY* – The Calamity Carolers of Doom presented a musical titled “(Don’t Go) Home for the Holidays!” One of the songs, “Oy Vey, Maria,” featured the lyrics “Are you absolutely sure you’re a virgin?”

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# **Business / Workplace**

## **March 10**



*Watonga, OK* – A priest phoned and e-mailed the Catholic League to inform us that a prisoner at Diamondback Correctional Facility was suing the facility’s parent company, the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). The prisoner, a Catholic, claimed he was not receiving meatless meals on Ash Wednesday and Fridays during Lent. After the Catholic League contacted CCA and spoke with the facility’s Vice President of Operations, the situation was remedied.

## **March**

The chain store Urban Outfitters offered for sale a T-shirt reading “Erin Go F– Yourself.” The T-shirt mocked the Irish phrase “Erin Go Braugh,” which is popular on St. Patrick’s Day.

## **June**

Clayboys, a greeting card company based in Canada, was

offering for sale a card showing a nun with four facial expressions. Above the images were the words "Our Lady of Perpetual Mood Swings." The inside of the card read "Holy Hot Flashes! Another Birthday!" The back of the card showed the nun engulfed in flames. Clayboys was also included in the Catholic League's *2004 Annual Report* for producing other cards of an offensive nature.

## July

**Streetsboro, OH** – Creative Irish Gifts, in its catalog, was offering sets of kitchen towels and potholders with drawings of nuns carrying drinks. Each towel or potholder contained one of the following captions: "Sister Mary Merlot" and "Sister Mary Margarita."

## July

**Provincetown, MA** – A local T-shirt store called Don't Panic! was selling shirts with the following sayings: "Catholic School Survivor," "Catholic Boy Gone Bad," and "Jesus is Coming. Hide the Porn." Provincetown was in the news because some of the prominent homosexual population there was accused of harassing heterosexuals.

## July

**Pittsfield, MA** – A company called Blue Q was selling products that ridicule the Catholic faith, including "Wash Away Your Sins Cleansing Bar." Descriptions on the soap's packaging included "Tempting 'Do It Again' Scent" and "For Liars Cheaters & Wrongdoers." Other items Blue Q was selling included the "Lookin' Good for Jesus Lip Balm."

## July 14

The Catholic League was notified about the website Chickenhead.com, which contained a number of items intended to offend Catholics. The site advertised a bumper sticker that

included a picture of Jesus that read, "Jesus Loves You" in large print, and in smaller print, "unless you're a Hebe, Towelhead, Homo, Buddhaboy, Hindufarian, Bull Dyke, Pagan, Atheist, or any other kind of hell-bound trash." Also on the site were "Absolute Bottom 50" lists. Among these lists was the "Absolute Bottom 50 List of Bible Commandments." Included on the list were "Though shalt not create graven images of any pre-teen hottie named Mary, to whom at some later day, I may opt to slip a celestial roofie and knock up" and "Thou shalt not abort any 'rape baby' unto whom I have bestowed divinely hideous deformities."

## **August**

***Chester Springs, PA*** – Residents of a new development called Byers Station erected a statue of the Blessed Mother between their front steps and a shrub. Shortly afterward, they received a letter from the Byers Station Homeowners Association stating that if they wanted to keep the statue outside, they would have to submit a form requesting permission. They submitted this request and received a reply letter, denying them permission to have the statue. The homeowners association informed them that others may find religious statues offensive and, for that reason, the request was denied.

The residents contacted the Catholic League and local media. We wrote to the homeowners association, informing them that to deny the request would set a precedent that would mean crèches, menorahs and other religious symbols also would be forbidden. Local media also covered this story. The association, after receiving all the attention, dropped the ban on the Blessed Mother statue. Following this, another Byers Station resident erected a Blessed Mother statue in his front yard.

## **August**

Signals, a company that sells a variety of gifts, was offering for sale a "Catholic School Survivor T-Shirt" in its mail order catalogs. The description of the shirt in the catalog read as follows: "Do nuns have legs? Do black patent leather shoes really reflect up? If these questions once concerned you (or still do), you'll relate to this shirt. Wear it as a badge of honor." A T-shirt and sweatshirt with the same saying were featured in the company's 2006 holiday catalogue.

## **August**

The Catholic League was informed that a list of prominent homosexuals, posted in the employee cafeteria of Universal Studios Orlando, included Pope Julius III (1550-1555). Claims that Pope Julius was homosexual have not been substantiated, and the Catholic League contacted the theme park and asked for evidence supporting such a claim. The theme park's director of diversity called us, saying he did not mean to offend and had downloaded the list from the website of the radical homosexual activist group LAMBDA. He promised not to post the list again and said he would meet with anyone who was upset with the flier.

## **October 24**

**New York, NY** – A staff member of Safe Horizon, a provider of domestic violence services, claimed on a panel discussion that some women become victims of violence as a result of emulating Mary, the Blessed Mother, by taking on weak and submissive qualities. Audience members objected to this statement, but the staff member ignored their remarks, saying she would continue to discuss this concept, which she called "Marianism." The Catholic League wrote to Safe Horizon's chief executive officer voicing objections to the staff member's teaching. In a reply letter, the CEO said while the concept this staff member taught may be uncomfortable for people to hear, it is part of our mission to provide education about the dynamics of domestic violence in order to help rebuild the

lives of victims.

He also said that Safe Horizon would review their training language in light of our concerns.

## **December**

The Catholic League was informed that clothing retailer Urban Outfitters was offering a number of items offensive to Catholics. Among the items was a tote bag featuring Jesus and two women who appear to be infatuated with him. Other items included Jesus and Mother Superior rubber ducks, and a greeting card that ponders the question “Would we still have Christmas if he’d traded in the wooden cross for some bling?”

## **December 6**

A woman from Utah informed the Catholic League of a poster that featured the Sacred Heart of Jesus that she saw in a novelty store in her area. The caption on the poster read “You Must Be Guilty of Something.” The poster is credited to an artist named Kenneth Ridgeway.

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# **Cartoons**



This cartoon by Domineck Scudera falsely accuses the pope of teaching hatred toward gays.

*(Philadelphia Gay News, December 29, 2006-January 4, 2007).*



Almost five years after the sex abuse scandal, some continue to attack the Catholic Church, including cartoonist Monte Wolverton.

(*Sandusky Register* [OH], December 21, 2006).

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Cartoonist Pat Oliphant wasted no time in using the scandal involving disgraced congressman Mark Foley to take a swipe at the Catholic Church.

(Syndicated, October 2, 2006)

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More than one cartoonist used the Mark Foley scandal to take a shot at the Catholic Church. This time the culprit was Henry Payne.

(*Las Cruces Sun-News*, October 30, 2006).

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Cartoonist Pat Oliphant features the Catholic Church as a regular target for ridicule in his work, and 2006 was no exception. Here, Oliphant accuses religious people, and specifically the Catholic Church, of being responsible for much of the trouble in the world.

(Syndicated, September 18, 2006).

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# Education

## January



**Shelburne, VT** – A pamphlet from Child Lures Prevention that educates parents, teachers and students about violence against children included, as a symbol of hate, the Chi-Rho. Christians frequently use the Chi-Rho as a monogram for Jesus (it is created by combining “X” and “P,” the first two letters in the Greek word for Christ.) The Catholic League wrote to the president of the publication and asked him to delete the sacred symbol when the publication was reprinted. The president replied, saying the Chi-Rho was unintentionally misused as a symbol of hate. He also said it had been removed from the master copy of the pamphlet and would not appear in future printings.

## January 26

**Eden Prairie, MN** – Eden Prairie Community Educational Services had planned to offer a three-part lecture entitled, “Da Vinci Code Historical Seminar,” about Dan Brown’s novel *The Da Vinci Code*. According to a flier advertising the lecture, “Most of the background items in the book were tied to events purportedly recorded in history.” The flier also stated that “Opus Dei frightfully exists right here in the USA, today” and falsely claimed that the Priory of Sion has existed since 1099. The lectures were later cancelled.

## March

**Eugene, OR** – An entire issue of the *Insurgent*, a University of Oregon student newspaper, contained images and articles offensive to Catholics and other Christians. Some of the offensive images included a cartoon of Jesus on the Cross,

with Jesus sporting an erection, and another cartoon of a naked Jesus kissing a naked demon, both of them with erections.

University of Oregon President David Frohnmayer responded in a way Bill Donohue characterized as “tepid.” Because of Frohnmayer’s response, Donohue sent a letter to every member of the Oregon Legislature, the governor, the state’s three Catholic bishops and others. He wrote, “At the very least, he [Frohnmayer] could have issued a moral condemnation.”

### **March 20**

**Plano, TX** – Student’s Witnessing Absolute Truth (SWAT), a Bible study group, sued the Plano Independent School District, alleging religious discrimination. The boy who founded the group and his parents alleged that the principal at the boy’s middle school ordered information about SWAT be removed from the school’s website. The school’s principal, after receiving complaints, stated that district policy did not allow the website to include information about groups not affiliated with district curriculum. The lawsuit alleged other non-curricular groups remained on the site.

On April 25, the school district changed its policy, giving Bible study groups the same benefits and privileges of other clubs. SWAT also accepted a settlement from the district. Although this agreement was reached in April, the district still had to wait on a judge’s ruling, which came in November.

### **March 31**

**Waco, TX** – *The Lariat*, Baylor University’s student newspaper, printed a photograph of a male student dressed as a pregnant nun. The photograph was taken at an on-campus event of a fraternal organization known as the NoZe Brotherhood, during which Baylor President John Lilley was inducted into the organization. At a meeting with editors of *The Dallas Morning News*, Lilley said the best way to handle things like this is

just to laugh them off.

Bill Donohue sent a letter to Lilley, asking him about the incident. Lilly, in a reply letter, apologized and assured him that “the individual pictured in no way represents Baylor University.” Lilley also said he had previously sent the Bishop of the Diocese of Austin the same apology and assurance.

## **April 18**

**San Francisco, CA** – A district judge ruled that the University of California’s Hastings College of Law could deny student activities funds to the Christian Legal Society, a group that does not allow gays, lesbians and non-Christians as members. The judge, in his ruling, said having homosexual students as members would not impair the group’s mission.

**Bill Donohue sent the following letter to every member of the Oregon legislature, the governor, and the state’s three Catholic bishops. The letter came in response to the anti-Christian cartoons and articles that appeared in the University of Oregon newspaper the Insurgent and the university president’s response:**



## **April 27, 28 & 29**

**Arlington, VA** – The H-B Woodlawn Program, an alternative public high school, presented three performances of “The Marriage of Bette and Boo,” a play written by Christopher Durang that ridicules Catholicism. “Bette and Boo,” which was first performed in 1985, blames the Catholic Church’s teachings for the problems of the play’s characters. “Bette and Boo” also portrays priests as incompetent and powerless to do anything. Playwright Durang is the author of other anti-

Catholic plays, including “Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You” and “Laughing Wild.”

## **May**

**Chapel Hill, NC** – The Carolina Union on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill displayed as part of an exhibit a poster that read, “I use religious icons as masturbatory aids,” and bore a photograph of a rosary.

## **May 8**

**Salmon, ID** – A high school English teacher was allowed to resume using the novel *The Chocolate War* in class. The novel takes place at an all-boys Catholic high school. The school is portrayed as a brutal place in which a mob of boys intimidates the main character, and the teachers turn a blind eye to what is going on.

## **May 24**

**Albany, NY** – A man who had been barred from speaking about his Christian faith on Ulster County Community College’s campus won a civil-rights lawsuit. Greg Davis had his application for a permit to speak denied because the school said his speaking did not constitute a “cultural, educational, social or recreational activity.” The Alliance Defense Fund reached an agreement with the college that Davis’s constitutional rights had been violated.

## **June 15**

**Hong Kong** – Astrophysicist Stephen Hawking, speaking at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said that John Paul II told scientists at a cosmology conference not to inquire into the beginning of the universe. The Catholic League researched this and discovered a similar recollection by Hawking in his book *A Brief History of Time*. We noted that, in the book, there were no quotation marks around the statements

attributed to the pope, determining that they were in fact Hawking's impression of what the pope said. We then found the speech Hawking was referencing. Here is what John Paul II actually said about the beginning of the universe: "*By itself* science cannot resolve such a question..." (Our emphasis). We responded to Hawking's words, saying the astrophysicist "should stop distorting the words of the pope."

## **June 15**

**Las Vegas, NV** – Foothill High School officials pulled the plug on a valedictorian's commencement speech, because the speech contained references to God, "The Lord" and Christ. Brittany McComb was in the middle of delivering her speech, when she began delivering this content, which the officials had previously removed. In response to the action, McComb sued the school.

## **June 16**

**Greensburg, PA** – A performance monologue titled "Immaculate Misconceptions," by playwright and University of Pittsburgh at Greensburg professor Stephen A. Schrum, was presented at the University's Ferguson Theater. A flyer advertising the performance said "Immaculate Misconceptions are the 'simplistic explanations, half-truths, canonical misinterpretations, and outright disinformation' received from the mouths of teachers by Catholic school students." The play was also presented in October.

## **June 26**

**Newark, NJ** – East Brunswick High School football coach Marcus Borden won a lawsuit against his school district. A judge ruled Borden's 1st and 14th Amendment rights of free speech, academic freedom, association and privacy were violated by the school district's policy prohibiting him from bowing his head and "taking a knee" during student-initiated prayer.

## **August**

**College Park, MD** – The Catholic League contacted National History Day regarding a negative item about Pope Pius XII on the educational organization's website. In 2005, the Catholic League contacted National History Day about the same item appearing in a flier about a student contest. We stated that it is slanderous to assume as a historical fact that Pius XII failed to oppose Hitler. In both cases, the officials at National History Day corrected the record to clear the good name of Pius XII.

## **August**

**Madison, WI** – The University of Wisconsin, at its Madison campus, denied funds to a Knights of Columbus student group. The University said the group's policy on admitting only Catholic men is against the state's law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion or creed. On September 22, the University, at its Madison campus, informed the UW Roman Catholic Foundation that it had rejected its application to be a registered student organization. In this case, the University stated the reason for the rejection was that only three of the 12 Foundation board members were students. Also in question was the status of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. The issue in that case was that the organization limits its leaders to only Christians.

## **August 23**

**Charlottesville, VA** – The Cavalier Daily, the daily student newspaper of the University of Virginia, published a cartoon offensive to Christians. The cartoon showed Jesus on a mathematical graph. The title of the cartoon was "Christ on a Cartesian Coordinate Plane." The following day, the paper published another cartoon of Mary and Joseph, with Mary holding the baby Jesus. Joseph asks, "Mary... I don't mean to

ruin this special moment, but how did you get that bumpy rash." Mary replies, "I swear, it was Immaculately Transmitted."

After the Catholic League requested an apology and the school was bombarded with 2,500 e-mails and 50 phone calls, the Cavalier Daily removed the offending comics from its website and issued a statement of regret. On October 16, the paper again ridiculed Jesus in a comic. In this comic, Jesus is shown carrying a cross, weeping, and then crucified. In the final panel, the cross is shown taking off like a rocket, with Jesus nailed to it saying, "Suckers!"

### **September 8**

**Minneapolis, MN** – Bill Donohue wrote to the president of the University of Minnesota to ask that an anti-Catholic play by Dario Fo, to be presented at the University in March, be cancelled. Newspapers including the Albany Times Union and Newsday had, in the past, noted the anti-Catholic nature of the play, "The Pope and the Witch." Even the University of Minnesota's website summarized the play's message as follows:

it is easy for a rich church to rage against abortion when millions are born into poverty, and become victims of the drug trade, from which people under the Vatican's protection can fill their pockets.

Donohue presented these facts in the letter to university president Robert H. Bruininks.

Bruininks, in his reply, contradicted himself. He justified the University presenting the play while, at the same time, conceding that the school allows for "a broad diversity of points of view that are free from racism, sexism, and other forms of prejudice, intolerance or harassment."

### **September 30**

**Queensbury, NY** – Adirondack Community College (ACC), part of the State University of New York (SUNY), sponsored Pagan Pride Day. Although an ACC news release said the purpose of the day was to, among other things, “support religious tolerance” and “eliminate prejudice based on religious beliefs,” this was not the case. Among the speakers at Pagan Pride Day was satanic priest John Allee, founder of the First Church of Satan. On the First Church of Satan’s website, Christians were instructed that they could “deprogram” themselves by “making fun of religious dogma.” On the site’s homepage, a short video popped up to the tune of Gloria Gaynor’s song, “I Will Survive.” In the video, a bearded man posing as Jesus, dressed in a white robe, starts miming the words to the song, disrobes and struts down a street in a diaper, before being hit by a bus. Among other videos is one that features a woman dressed as a nun in a black veil wearing a black bra, black slip and black panties; she is shown masturbating. The Catholic League told the press, “This isn’t higher education—it’s an obscene assault on Christianity.”

## **October**

**Williamsburg, VA** – The president of the College of William & Mary ordered a cross be removed from the campus’ Wren Chapel. The cross had been in the chapel since the 1930s. An assistant director on the campus released a statement explaining the decision: “In order to make the Wren Chapel less of a faith-specific space, and to make it more welcoming to students, faculty, staff and visitors of all faiths, the cross has been removed from the altar area.” At a meeting before William & Mary’s Board of Visitors, college president Gene Nichol further defended his actions, saying the cross “sends an unmistakable message that the Chapel belongs more fully to some of us than to others.” In December, President Nichol, in an e-mail message, said a plaque would be placed in the chapel permanently to commemorate the chapel’s Anglican origins. In addition, the cross would be placed on the altar on Sunday

“with expanded hours.”

## **October**

**Radford, VA** – Radford University’s student-run “Whim Internet Magazine” featured an ongoing cartoon called “Christ On Campus.” During the week of Halloween, the comic showed Jesus attempting to go trick-or-treating and being mistaken for a pedophile. Subsequent editions of the cartoon show Jesus encountering a male prostitute and becoming addicted to a computer game.

## **October**

**Greenbelt, MD** – The Rutherford Institute filed a lawsuit against Dwight D. Eisenhower Middle School because an assistant principal warned a student not to read her Bible during her lunch break. The mother of the student said the assistant principal approached the student and told her to put the Bible away. The mother also said the assistant principal told the student she would be punished if “it happened again.”

## **October 24**

**Cypress, CA** – A woman notified the Catholic League of offensive student artwork at Cypress College. In an area where students are allowed to display artwork, the woman saw sculptures of: a woman dressed as a nun in a short habit with a cross covering her crotch, a Blessed Mother figure dressed as Wonder Woman, an elephant dressed as a bishop, and Ronald McDonald dressed as a priest. When the woman brought this up with the Dean of Fine Arts, the dean told her that, although the art could be offensive, she was not going to tell the students what they could and could not display. The dean also said that the artwork was scheduled to be removed from display soon.

## **October 25**

**Chico, CA** – On the website of the Center for Excellence on the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, Human Rights and Tolerance, there was a lesson plan offered to teachers about the roles of various individuals in the Holocaust. Participants are asked to rate the level of guilt of these various individuals. One entry reads, “The Pope, who made no public statement against Nazi policy.” This statement is not true, as the *New York Times*, on Christmas Day 1941 and 1942, wrote that Pope Pius XII was “a lonely voice” among an otherwise silent and dark Europe.

### **October 31**

**Winter Garden, FL** – Theater students at West Orange High School were preparing for their next production, “Agnes of God,” in which a nun gives birth in a convent, murders her baby, and flushes the corpse down a toilet. In the play, the Mother Superior of the convent attempts to cover up the crime. The students at West Orange High were planning to enter “Agnes of God” in the Florida Theatre Conference. The Conference describes itself as “a non-profit, educational theatre organization founded in 1956 for the purpose of providing programs and services to individuals and group membership.”

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## **Government**

### **January 6**



**Tallahassee, FL** – A Florida Supreme Court’s 5-2 ruling ended the Opportunity Scholarship Program, which used public money to pay tuition for students who have left failing schools. The ruling ratified the anti-Catholic Blaine Amendment that was written into Florida’s Constitution. The Blaine amendment comes out of the 19th century. Its purpose was to deny any

public monies to Catholic institutions.

## **January 20**

**Washington, DC** –The Democratic National Committee (DNC) posted on its website, within the “Catholic Outreach” section, a statement on the opposition to a voucher program designed to help Catholic schoolchildren affected by Hurricane Katrina. On the homepage of the DNC’s website was a section entitled “Interview with Eleanor Smeal on Samuel Alito.” In October 2005, Smeal said if Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito were to be confirmed, “the majority of the Court would be Roman Catholics, which would underrepresent other religions, not to mention nonbelievers.”

## **January 25**

**Boston, MA** – A Massachusetts House bill that would have required religious organizations to file annual financial statements with the state was defeated 147-3. Representative Marian Walsh’s bill would have forced religious organizations with annual revenue of over \$500,000 to file annual financial reports and to report all real estate holdings to the attorney general’s office.

## **February**

**Deltona, FL** – The City of Deltona’s acting city manager removed three paintings from the lobby of City Hall because the works contained religious imagery. The paintings were part of the city’s Black History Month celebrations, for which local artists and city employees displayed artwork. The works included “Going Home,” which featured a New Orleans-style rendition of a street funeral procession, in which a priest with a collar stands among the procession holding a Bible; “Christmas Basket,” showing a priest “bearing a basket of treats for a woman and her child;” and the third painting showing a man, wearing a cap with “I Love Jesus” on it, standing next to a priest. The city manager attempted to

broker a deal by placing the paintings in a room typically off limits to the public. After a federal lawsuit was filed against the city, all the paintings were reposted.

**Denver, CO** – Three bills introduced in the Colorado State Legislature would have either removed or modified the statutes of limitation in cases of child sexual molestation involving private institutions. The bills would have left Catholic institutions, including churches and schools, open to prosecution. Public schools, however, were shielded under the provision of sovereign immunity.

Bill Donohue wrote a letter to all Colorado state legislators in response to the proposed legislation. The letter detailed the discriminatory intent of the bills, and asked lawmakers to treat all parties fairly by amending the bills or rejecting them.

Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput had said he had no problem with any law that fairly covered everyone. The Colorado Association of School Executives said they were “studying” the bills, while the Colorado Education Association (CEA) brazenly spoke out against them. The Catholic League told the press that what started as a Catholic-bashing crusade “opened Pandora’s box for Colorado’s teachers,” putting them in a “lose-lose situation.”

Rep. Terrance Carroll said that amending the bills to include public schools was just a ruse—he didn’t think the bishops would support any bill that would lift the statute of limitations, even if all entities were covered. He said he was ready to “call the Catholic Church’s bluff.” After the bishops endorsed the revised bills, Carroll exploded the very next day saying their stance “thoroughly disgusts me.”

On March 14 one of the bills, House Bill 1088, passed the Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee and was eventually signed into law. The bill removed the statute of limitations for

criminal lawsuits but did not affect civil lawsuits, and covered both private and public entities. On May 4, Colorado lawmakers decided to drop the section of another bill that would have extended the statute of limitations. The decision came following resistance from the public schools' insurance agents after they found out their clients could be sued. The Catholic League responded, "those who feigned interest in protecting the kids proved to be far more interested in protecting their pocketbooks." Eventually, legislators failed to pass that bill, and the third bill in the Senate had already died.

***Bill Donohue sent the following letter to Colorado lawmakers in response to three proposed bills that would have suspended the statute of limitations in response for child sexual abuse claims against private institutions. Catholic institutions would have been open to prosecution, but public institutions would have been protected.***



## **February 14**

**Albany, NY** – Two groups of Catholic school students, principals and parents from Brooklyn traveled to the state capital to discuss school vouchers with Assemblywoman Adele Cohen, who represented parts of Brooklyn. The assemblywoman refused to discuss vouchers and instead lectured students from St. Patrick's School in Bay Ridge on how women should not be stay-at-home mothers. Cohen also refused to meet with a group from St. Bernadette's in Dyker Heights. She slammed the door in the faces of the pastor and the school's principal after the principal said the assemblywoman's refusal to meet would be remembered in November (election time). Cohen tried to spin the incidents by sending a letter to Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio. Cohen claimed she was victimized by the Catholic school groups and said in her letter, "It makes me wonder what kind of education the Church is providing in its schools." On

March 3, Bill Donohue wrote to every member of the New York State Assembly, asking them to censure Cohen.

## **February 15**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Pennsylvania court system blurred the background of a photograph of the state Supreme Court in a brochure because it showed a courtroom with a mural of the Ten Commandments.

## **February 22**

**Concord, NH** – New Hampshire House Bill 1127, proposed by Representative Mary Stuart Gile, mandated all members of the clergy to report instances of suspected child abuse to authorities, allowing no exceptions. The bill attempted to remove the priest-penitent privilege that has traditionally been granted by legislators. The bill was sent to be studied for the next year on a 208-111 vote and was not debated. Gile tried to pass a similar bill in 2003 and was defeated.

## **February 28**

**York County, VA** – A federal judge ruled that a public school principal had the right to remove Christian-themed postings from a classroom. School officials removed the painting “The Prayer at Valley Forge” by Arnold Friberg along with a flier promoting the National Day of Prayer. Information about the religious practices of Inca and Mayan civilizations was allowed to remain.

## **March 2**

**Hartford, CT** – Bill Donohue wrote a letter to the Connecticut Legislature’s Public Health Committee asking it to accede to the Connecticut Catholic Conference’s request for a religious exemption for Catholic hospitals. The exemption would free the hospitals from being forced to provide emergency contraception to rape victims. Donohue stated in a letter,

Requiring Roman Catholic hospitals to abide by state strictures on the distribution of emergency contraception ineluctably violates both the religious liberty provision of the First Amendment and the establishment provision.

He also said that, “a Catholic institution cannot be considered Catholic if it is mandated to yield its religious prerogatives to the state.” On March 6, Connecticut’s State Victim Advocate, James Papillo, told the state legislature’s Public Health Committee that forcing Catholic hospitals to give rape victims emergency contraception was anti-Catholic. On March 7, Lt. Gov. Kevin Sullivan called for Papillo to resign: he accused Papillo, a Catholic deacon, of abusing his office. On March 20, the legislation was allowed to die.

### **March 13**

**Chicago, IL**—Rick Garcia, the political director of gay rights organization Equality Illinois, confirmed that he had called Chicago Archbishop Francis Cardinal George a bigot. Garcia said he did this because of the Cardinal’s “opposition to the basic civil rights of gay people,” and more specifically, Cardinal George’s “opposition to the civil recognition of same-sex marriage.” Gubernatorial candidate Jim Oberweis demanded Governor Rod Blagojevich remove Garcia from the governor’s hate crimes commission because of the remarks.

### **March 14**

**San Francisco, CA** – Mayor Gavin Newsom canceled his planned trip to attend the elevation of former San Francisco Archbishop William Levada to Cardinal, after Newsom read about the Vatican reissuing its policy on gay adoption. Newsom stated that the Church’s position was “corrosive and divisive.”

### **March 19**

**Golden, CO** – Colorado state representative Gwyn Green

interrupted Sunday Mass, claiming a letter (from Denver Archbishop Charles Chaput) that was read aloud was inaccurate. The letter addressed two state bills concerning statutes of limitation for crimes involving the abuse of children. When a radio host later re-read the letter to Green, she said she couldn't find an error in it.

### **March 21**

**San Francisco, CA** – The San Francisco Board of Supervisors passed a resolution in response to the Catholic Church's teaching that children have a right to be raised by a mother and father, and not any other combination. Among other things, the resolution called the church's teaching on adoption "hateful," "discriminatory," "insulting" and "callous." In response, the Thomas More Law Center sued the City and County of San Francisco on behalf of the 6,000 Catholic League members who live there.

### **March 22**

**St. Paul, MN** – City of St. Paul Human Rights Director Tyrone Terrill evicted a toy rabbit, colored eggs and a sign with the words "Happy Easter" from the City Hall lobby. The display was expelled on the grounds it may offend non-Christians.

### **March 23**

**San Miguel, CA** – The California Culture and Historical Endowment told Mission San Miguel that it was rejecting the non-profit group's application for one million dollars to help recover from earthquake damage. The Endowment rejected the request because a "sectarian institution," the Catholic Church, owned the mission.

### **March 31**

**Madison, WI** – The Association of Faith-based Organizations filed a lawsuit claiming state employees were not being

allowed to make charitable payroll deductions to certain charities. The Association claimed a rule on the matter discriminated against groups that require employees, board members and volunteers to share the groups' religious beliefs. Some of these groups believe homosexuality is a sin. State rules require charities receiving donations not discriminate on the basis of religion or sexual orientation in hiring staff and accepting members. In October, a federal judge ruled the state program may not exclude religious charities that use religion as a basis for employment or membership on their governing boards.

### **April 19**

**Washington, DC** –At a *Christian Science Monitor* breakfast, Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean had this to say about the intersection of religion and politics: “The religious community has to decide whether it wants to be tax exempt or involved in politics.”

### **May 23**

**San Diego, CA** – A U.S. District Court ordered that a 43-foot cross atop Mt. Soledad be destroyed. On May 23 the San Diego City Council voted to continue a 17-year fight to keep the cross where it is. An atheist who was also a military veteran had filed a lawsuit, saying the cross was discriminatory because it sits on public land. The court rejected an effort to give a private group ownership of the land. On August 14, President Bush signed a congressionally approved measure to transfer ownership of the land to the federal government. Proponents of keeping the cross where it is thought it would have a better chance of being allowed on federal property as opposed to state property.

### **May 31**

**Delta, CO** – An artist filed a federal civil-rights lawsuit against the city of Delta after the city had two of the

artist's paintings removed from its recreation center because they contained Bible verses. Sharon Marolf's paintings had been displayed until someone complained about being offended by the verses.

## **June**

**Albany, NY** – The Catholic League filed an amicus brief in a lawsuit involving Catholic Charities. The case, *Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany v. Serio*, involved a New York state statute requiring religious charities' prescription drug plans to cover contraception.

## **June 8**

**Portland, OR** –A federal judge ruled that a lawsuit accusing the Vatican of conspiring to protect a sexually abusive priest could move forward. The judge said the Vatican did not enjoy foreign sovereign immunity in this case because it supposedly knew the priest had a history of sexual misconduct. The Catholic League told the press that Jeffrey Anderson, the lawyer who sued the Vatican, has made millions of dollars suing the Catholic Church. We said about Anderson's most recent lawsuit, "What's really going on here is an attempt to fleece the Vatican by a multi-millionaire with an agenda."

## **June 15**

**Annapolis, MD** – Maryland Governor Robert Ehrlich fired Robert J. Smith from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Board for remarks Smith made about homosexual behavior (Smith was appointed to the transit board by Ehrlich). Smith, appearing on a local cable program during off hours, said, "the government should not proffer a special place of entitlement within the laws of the United States for persons of sexual deviancy." Following a Metro board meeting, Smith confirmed he made the remarks and further stated, "Homosexual behavior, in my view, is deviant." He said, "I'm a Roman Catholic." The Catholic League responded, "The real

issue here is the right of government employees to voice their religious convictions with impunity.”

## **July 11**

**Fort Collins, CO**—The Fort Collins City Council decided that only a Christmas tree would be allowed on city property during the holiday season. The decision changed a previous one in which the council had ruled that a menorah would also be allowed on each night of Hanukkah. Councilman Ben Manvel said, “The Christmas trees aren’t a problem because they were originally pagan. If we allowed the menorah and a crèche, then we’d end up with a parade of other religious symbols.”

## **July 17**

**Washington, DC** – On the Senate floor, Senator Arlen Specter (PA) made his argument for unlimited stem cell research by bringing up Galileo and Pope Boniface VIII, casting them as Catholic victim and victimizer. He said such attitudes “in retrospect look foolish, absolutely ridiculous.” The following day on the Senate floor, Senator Charles Schumer (NY) said “If you don’t like stem cell research, don’t use it for you or your family. But don’t tell millions of Americans who may not share your faith that they cannot use it, as well.” Schumer also called evangelical Christians “theocrats,” saying, “they want their faith to dictate what the government does. That, in a word... is un-American.” On July 19, Senator Tom Harkin (IA) responded to President Bush’s veto of the bill that would have expanded embryonic stem cell research. Harkin said in a statement,

The President is closing his heart and mind to this fact, and putting himself in the company of people like Cardinal Roberto Bellarmino, who told Galileo it was heresy to claim that the Earth revolved around the sun, and not the other way around. Galileo was later sentenced to life imprisonment.

## **July 29**

**St. Bernard Parish, LA** – The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Louisiana sent a letter to officials of St. Bernard Parish regarding a planned Hurricane Katrina memorial that included a cross bearing a likeness of Jesus' face. The ACLU told officials that putting such a memorial on public property would be a violation of the First Amendment. The ACLU also claimed that there was official government involvement in the memorial. Parish officials promised that the money, time, labor and land being used for the memorial were all donated. On August 29, the planned memorial was dedicated.

## August 15

**Sacramento, CA** – A proposal by State Senator Abel Maldonado would have authorized state funds to be put toward the restoration of California's deteriorating missions. The bill failed to get the approval of the Senate Judiciary Committee. A spokesman for one of the other state senators said the problem was that the bill would have authorized money to be given to churches with ongoing services. The Catholic Mission San Miguel is just one of the historic structures that would have been helped by this bill.

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# Media

## BOOKS

### January 19



Raymond Khoury's novel *The Last Templar* was released. The novel is about a couple that tracks down the diaries of Jesus. The diaries reveal that Jesus' Resurrection, miracles and the idea of salvation are all a fabrication.

## **January 31**

Steve Berry's novel *The Third Secret* was released. The novel is about a couple that discovers that Church leadership hid the true revelation of the Blessed Mother of Fatima. In the novel, the Blessed Mother reveals that birth control and abortion are fine, priestly celibacy is wrong, the ordination of women is right, and homosexual marriage is noble.

## **March 28**

Michael Baigent's book *The Jesus Papers: Exposing the Greatest Cover-Up in History* was released. In the book, Baigent claims Jesus wasn't born of a virgin birth and didn't die on the cross, but rather went away to recuperate. Book publisher Harper San Francisco said the book's release date was chosen more than a year in advance to coincide with Easter. Baigent was featured on NBC's "Dateline" on April 2. He is also co-author of *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, a book released in 1982 that presents the idea that Jesus and Mary Magdalene married and their bloodline continues to the present day.

## **July 25**

The novel *The Expected One* was released. In the book, author Kathleen McGowan claims she is a descendent of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. McGowan expected people to believe this without her providing any proof. The author had originally attempted to get her novel published as a non-fiction book.

## **November 16**

**New York, NY** – Publishing company Hendrick teNeues held a reception at the Gramercy Park Hotel to celebrate the release of the book *Katlick School*, by Sante D'Orazio. The book features a model shown in a uniform typical of Catholic schoolgirls, and then shows the model in various stages of undress. The model is eventually shown nude except for a pair of thigh-high black boots.

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## INTERNET

### **January 11**

The website marijuana.org claimed that the Bush administration was handing over the United States Supreme Court to the Catholic Church. A statement posted on the website about the nomination of Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court was even marked by a siren and lights. Marijuana.org claimed that the appointment would be "bad news for marijuana smokers and women in America. Samuel Alito, Jr., who is married and has two children, would become the current court's fifth Roman Catholic."

### **August 2**

Two celebrities wrote on the Internet site the Huffington Post about anti-Semitic comments that actor/director/producer Mel Gibson made while intoxicated, and took the opportunity to attack religion and the movie "The Passion of the Christ," respectively. Comedian/commentator Bill Maher wrote:

Why, when Mels's [sic] id is released, its [sic] about the Jews f-ing everything up, just like it was with Hitler. Except Mel Gibson, when his id is in check, I believe, really knows how wrong that is, and how stupid. He, I believe, at least fights with himself about this. But he'll never win as long as he's so religious, because, I hate to tell you, the disease isn't alcholism [sic], the disease is religion.

### **October 19**

Comedy Central began to show on its website the series "Good God." The series centers on the daily aspects of life in God's office. According to the Boston College paper *The Heights*, "In the series, God appears more as an easily distracted average Joe with a play-before-work mentality that makes him a

borderline incompetent CEO.” One episode of “Good God” features Jesus getting arrested for possessing marijuana. In the same episode, God goes to visit Jesus in jail. During an escalating argument, Jesus says to God, “You’re not even my real father.” God replies, “Oh yeah? Let’s see your real dad bail you out on a carpenter’s salary. By the way, until you can prove to me that you still belong, it’s just me and the Holy Ghost.” God also sticks his middle finger at Jesus and says, “F– you.”

## **November 9**

The website [atheism.about.com](http://atheism.about.com) featured a section titled “War on Christmas Propaganda Posters” on its image gallery. One of the posters was from World War II, redone to reflect “The War on Christmas” as atheists see it. It showed the bottom part of a soldier’s leg; the leg was stepping on a crèche. The text on the poster read, “CRUSH A CRECHE!: Keep America free from a religious Christmas this year. It’s up to you!”

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## **MAGAZINES**

### **February 9**

The cover of *Rolling Stone* featured a picture of hip-hop artist Kanye West wearing a crown of thorns and blood streaming down his face. Accompanying the picture was an article, “The Passion of Kanye West,” which described the rapper’s self-confessed passion for pornography.

### **May 1**

Douglas Currie, in an article in *The Weekly Standard*, justified an episode of the Comedy Central show “South Park” including a depiction of Jesus defecating on the American flag. Currie wrote that Bill Donohue “missed the point entirely” in “South Park” including such an image. Currie

wrote, "It wasn't Jesus being mocked, it was Comedy Central." South Park included the depiction in response to not being allowed to broadcast an image of Muhammad.

*The Weekly Standard* published Donohue's response. He wrote "Although it's entirely legitimate to highlight hypocrisy over the Danish cartoons, attempts to do so by gratuitously trashing Christianity... are plainly unjustified."

## **June**

*Smithsonian* printed an article titled "Who Was Mary Magdalene?" in which writer James Carroll, known for his attacks on the Catholic Church, used Mary Magdalene to slander the Church.

Carroll opened his article with the following: "The whole history of western civilization is epitomized in the cult of Mary Magdalene." He also wrote, "In the gospels several women come into the story of Jesus with great energy, including erotic energy." The article included numerous other references to sexuality. Carroll concluded, "But what most drove the anti-sexual sexualizing of Mary Magdalene was the male need to dominate women." Carroll used Gnostic texts, as well as books by authors who don't agree with Catholic doctrine, to make his point. One of the books Carroll cited was reviewed by *Commonweal*, a magazine not shy about challenging the teachings of the Catholic Church. This is what the magazine had to say about the book:

Marred with trivial errors of fact, reliance on tendentious sources as well as citations almost always culled from secondary sources (and, thus, mostly unusable), the author trumpets her own prejudices with wearying regularity.

Scholars who subscribe to the magazine and who had received the issue a week before it reached newsstands notified the Catholic League. Bill Donohue responded by sending a letter to the members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees,

the Board of Regents and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. The Institution, publisher of *Smithsonian*, is government funded. The magazine eventually published an edited version of the letter.

## **July**

The Catholic League was informed of and sent a booklet, published by a media company called Tomorrow's World, which claimed the Catholic Church, as well as some Protestant churches, "all have retained dozens of pagan ideas, and practices, that would have been utterly foreign to the early Church! Satan has indeed done a masterful job of creating a counterfeit Christianity."

## **August**

The Catholic League was alerted to products sold by the mountain biking magazine *Dirt Rag*. T-shirts bearing the Sacred Heart and the words "Dirt Rag" were available, as were pint glasses with the same image. The sales pitch for the shirt urged readers to "display your divine love of mountain biking with our new Sacred Heart shirt." The pint glass was described as "sacred and strong, enduring and ever-lasting, our new sacred heart pint glass fuses the imagery of the Sacred Heart with the pastime of adventurous mortals."

## **September**

Frances Swaggart, in her husband Jimmy Swaggart's magazine *The Evangelist*, wrote that the Catholic Church's hierarchy is "outside the Biblical model." She also wrote, "Church law is a roadblock to the Cross." The article was part 15 of an ongoing series titled, "Catholicism: A Modern Babylon."

## **September 27**

The Catholic League requested permission from *The American Prospect* to reprint an article that appeared in the magazine

about the reaction to Pope Benedict XVI's speech at Regensburg University. We were denied permission because of our stances on abortion and gay rights.

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## MOVIES

### **March 17**

The documentary "Rape of the Soul" was released. The movie claims to expose pornographic and satanic images in religious artwork. The documentary also claims some of the artwork was located in Chicago's Holy Name Cathedral, and that the Catholic Church has attempted to keep these images from being detected.



*The above letter was published in the New York Times on March 6, 2006.*

### **May 19**

"The Da Vinci Code" opened in movie theaters worldwide, without a disclaimer stating that the film was a work of fiction. The film was based on the Dan Brown novel of the same name. The book includes certain "facts," which are actually lies. The first of these is that a secret society known as the Priory of Sion has known that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married and kept this secret alive. The second "fact" claims that Opus Dei is an evil organization, even though it is actually a Catholic lay group. The third "fact" claimed that the novel was based on historical documents that show the divinity of Jesus was forged in the fourth century.

Bill Donohue saw the movie and said, "This was one of the most inane films I have ever seen." He said, "It takes forever to get going," and when it finally does, "fails to sustain the

momentum." He concluded, "because it fails to persuade, this is one movie practicing Christians have nothing to worry about."

## **May 24**

It was announced that "The Da Vinci Code" would open on May 26 in India with the following disclaimer at the beginning and the end of the film: "The characters and incidents portrayed and the names herein are fictitious, and any similarity to the name, character or history of any person is entirely coincidental and unintentional." The disclaimer came following negotiations between Sony Pictures and India's censorship board. Sony had, a week earlier, agreed to put a similar disclaimer at the beginning and the end of "The Da Vinci Code" in Thailand. The Catholic League responded, "Some people will do anything for a buck. Having run up against a brick wall in India and Thailand, Sony caved and delivered on the disclaimer they said wasn't necessary." We concluded, "It shouldn't take the presence of a censorship board to persuade Sony to do the right thing—ethics alone should dictate."

## **June 7**

In a Scripps Howard News Service story, vice president for marketing of Provident Films (owned by Sony) Kris Fuhr was quoted as saying someone at the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) told her that the movie "Facing the Giants" was awarded a PG rating because the film "was heavily laden with messages from one religion and that this might offend people from other religions."

The Catholic League confirmed Fuhr's account of the conversation. Attempts to discuss them with the appropriate MPAA employees were unsuccessful. We wrote to MPAA Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Dan Glickman on June 13, requesting that Glickman look into the matter, and encouraged our members to contact Glickman as well.

MPAA ratings board chairman Joan Graves contacted us on June 16. She said that although they normally don't comment to the press about individual films (besides providing ratings and the reasons behind the ratings), because of the misunderstanding in this case, she felt obliged to respond. She said she was the person who spoke with Fuhr. Graves said she told Fuhr that "Facing the Giants" received a PG rating because of other issues, including depression, matters relating to pregnancy and sports-related violence—not for being overtly religious. The Catholic League was satisfied with the response and happy to know the MPAA doesn't give movies a PG rating for being "too religious."

### **August 25**

A film from writer-director Greg Pritkin titled "Surviving Eden" opened in select cities. The movie is a comedy about a down-on-his luck fellow who wins a "Survivor"-type reality show. It features one character, Sister Agnes O'Malley, who is a vehicle for pot-shots against the church. Sister Agnes is a contestant on the show, which involves living naked on an island. She informs the other characters that not all nuns are virgins. There is also a bit of dialogue between Sister Agnes and another character, Maria. After Sister Agnes reveals she is a nun, Maria says, "That must suck." When Sister Agnes asks why, Maria responds, "Cause priests only like boys." The filmmakers included this in the film's trailer.

### **October 13**

The documentary "Deliver Us From Evil" was released. The movie focuses on the predatory behavior of a former priest, Oliver O'Grady, a notorious pedophile. The Catholic League would not find it anti-Catholic, per se, for any director to produce a documentary about sexual abuse in the Church. The reason we objected to "Deliver Us" was that the director of this movie, Amy Berg, was not a disinterested observer.

For example, on the Huffington Post on October 4, Berg wrote,

The Catholic Church would like us to believe that the clergy abuse scandals are behind us. 'Old news' they say. But with the revelation that Mark Foley was sexually molested as a teenager by a member of the clergy, this issue is clearly not behind us. It is not old news. We don't know the full extent of Foley's abuse as a teenager, but we see clearly how the long term effects of this kind of exploitation, which took place nearly 40 years ago, is causing havoc today in the lives of many people... If you want to understand more fully the behavior of Congressional leadership, watch the disturbing depositions of Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony and his lieutenants in *Deliver Us from Evil*.

Religion writer Charlotte Allen wrote the following on Beliefnet.com about "Deliver Us":

Had Berg stuck to this quadrangle of O'Grady, Mahony, the victims, and their parents, she would have had a riveting film. Instead, she decides to turn it all into a generalized anti-Catholic screed. Talking heads appear and reappear, mostly disaffected Catholic priests and victims' lawyers, who blame priestly celibacy for the O'Grady and numerous other sex-scandals that have recently torn apart the church... Another culprit cited in the film is the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, the teaching that the bread and wine at Mass become Jesus's body and blood. How's that again? Somehow there's supposed to be a connection, one of the talking heads explains, between denying holy communion to a politician who supports abortion and molesting a youngster... The movie also attempts to finger then-Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) as responsible for the sexual transgressions and states—falsely—that President Bush granted the pope "amnesty" in a victim's civil suit. (Actually, a court ruled that there was no jurisdiction over the distant pontiff.)

**December 25**

The Dimension Films movie "Black Christmas" opened in theaters. The horror film is about college girls being terrorized during Christmas. The reason this warrants entry in this report is the people behind the movie: Bob and Harvey Weinstein. They previously gave us movies including "Priest" (about priests who are dysfunctional as a result of being priests), which they attempted to release on Good Friday in 1995, until the Catholic League pressured them to change the date. The Weinsteins were also behind "40 Days and 40 Nights" (about a Catholic who is ridiculed for giving up sex for Lent), which opened during Lent of 2002. The fact that the Weinsteins again chose a holy day to release their latest movie further illustrated their pattern of offenses.

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## MUSIC

### **May 22**

**Los Angeles, CA** – The pop singer Madonna, during her "Confessions" tour, wore a crown of thorns and hung from a mirrored cross in front of a screen flashing images of the Third World, all while singing her ballad "Live to Tell." On August 4, she performed the same act in Rome, two miles from the Vatican.

### **November 11**

In a published interview, musician Elton John said he would "ban religion completely," claiming it "has always tried to turn hatred toward gay people." The singer also contradicted himself, saying, "But there are so many people I know who are gay and love their religion."

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## NEWSPAPERS

### **January 20**

**Washington, DC** – The alternative *Washington City Paper*, in its “Post Secrets” section, printed a picture of Rosary beads with the text, “I use religious icons as masturbation aids.” The same picture with the same text was reprinted in the February 10 edition, accompanying a letter that denounced the paper for printing the picture. The paper titled the letter “Beads of Fury.”

## **February 8**

**New York, NY** – Michael Kimmelman wrote a story in the *New York Times*, titled “A Startling New Lesson in the Power of Imagery,” about a Danish newspaper publishing cartoons depicting the Muslim prophet Muhammed. Kimmelman recalled how the Catholic League protested the 1999 “Sensation” exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art that featured a “collage of the Virgin Mary with cutouts from pornographic magazines and shellacked clumps of elephant dung.” Kimmelman noted that in contrast to Muslims, “No protester torched the museum or called for beheading anybody.” The *New York Times* refused to reprint the cartoons of Muhammed, but on the same page as Kimmelman’s article printed a reproduction of the insulting Virgin Mary portrait.

## **February 19**

**Chicago, IL** – The *Chicago Tribune* printed a column by cartoonist Pat Oliphant in which the cartoonist criticized a Danish newspaper’s decision to print cartoons of Muhammed that Muslims violently protested. Oliphant wrote, “I have to say that the point of these Danish cartoons eludes me, except as a needless and useless provocation.” He claimed he is able to accomplish his aims “without resorting to gratuitous ridicules of their religion or religious icons attached to it.” The *Tribune* printed on the same page a reproduction of another of Oliphant’s cartoons that depicted the “Celebration of Spring at St. Paedophila’s—The Annual Running of the Altar Boys.” The cartoon showed priests chasing children out of

“Saint Paedophila’s Catholic Church.”

## **February 21**

**Pittsburgh, PA** – The Catholic League contacted Colin McNickle, the editorial page editor of the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, to request permission to reprint an anti-Catholic article by Dan Collins from February 10 and the reply from Catholic League board member Robert Lockwood on February 14. McNickle denied our request. On February 19, in response to Lockwood’s commentary, McNickle wrote in the *Tribune-Review* that he would never be ashamed to print “points of view contrary to the conventional wisdom,” because to do so would mean “the beginning of the end of a robust free press.” He wrote this even though he denied the Catholic League permission to reprint the original articles.

## **February 28**

**Hartford, CT** – The *Hartford Courant* printed a cartoon by Bob Englehart that showed a monk burning a scientist at the stake for the “crimes of abortion, birth control, evolution, stem cell research...” On the *Courant*’s website, Englehart wrote that, throughout history, religious conservatives “have tried to stop every human advancement in science, medicine or enlightenment.” In fact, no institution in either western or eastern civilization has pioneered science more than the Catholic Church. The burning of people at the stake was a practice utilized more by secular authorities than ecclesiastical ones.

## **March 5**

**Chicago, IL** – The *Chicago Sun-Times* ran a long article by a local columnist from another newspaper titled “Bless Me Father, for You Have Sinned: A Suburban Newspaper Columnist Tells the Story of How He Fell Prey to a Predatory Priest.” It was a detailed account of what allegedly happened to him in 1979 at the hands of a now deceased priest. Meanwhile,

the *Telegraph Herald* (Dubuque, IA) began an eight-day series that focused on sexual abuse in the Archdiocese of Dubuque. The series looked at sexual abuse by priests over decades and was complete with accounts from alleged victims and portraits of their alleged victimizers. Titles assigned to each story were revealing: "A Culture of Catholicity"; "Victims Tell Their Stories"; "Unholy Fathers"; "Raising the Bar"; "Are the Children Protected"; "The Effect on the Good and Holy"; "The Support Groups" and "Apology and Forgiveness." The series, as well as the *Sun-Times* article, singled out the Catholic Church four years after the sex abuse scandal broke. There were no new allegations reported.

### **March 13**

**Boston, MA** – A *Boston Globe* editorial criticized Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney for endorsing a bill that would have allowed Catholic Charities to continue to provide adoption services without servicing gay couples. The editorial lectured Romney that he was the "governor, not a Catholic bishop," and it also accused Romney, a Mormon, of "accepting instruction on public policy from the pope."

### **March 22**

**Rochester, NY** – Frank De Blase, in an article appearing in Rochester's alternative weekly *City Newspaper*, called Catholic icon statues "so g-d- morose." He said the icon statues in his home shared space with "naked lady statues."

### **March 23**

**Phoenix, AZ** – Robert Pela, in a story written for the *Phoenix New Times*, called the consuming of the Eucharist "pretending to eat the flesh of God" and the eating of "a hunk of pretend flesh from some dead guy." The article was titled "Bite o' Christ."

### **May 5**

**San Francisco, CA** – In his “Bad Reporter” comic strip in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Don Asmussen wrote, “‘A Day Without Homosexuals’ closes the nation’s Catholic churches.” The swipe against the church was a reference to the May 1 rallies in which illegal aliens, and those who support them, did not show up for work and instead rallied for immigrants’ rights in streets around the U.S.

### **May 19**

**San Francisco, CA** – Don Asmussen, in his “Bad Reporter” comic strip in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, included a panel titled “Louisiana, Missouri rush to ban Jesus’ right to marry.” The panel goes on to detail how Jesus’ “marriage to Mary Magdalene” in one state would not be recognized in another. Asmussen also wrote that this was a result of “The Da Vinci Code,” and how its “plotline has stoked fear throughout red states.”

### **May 25**

**Nashville, TN** – *Nashville Scene* editor Liz Garrigan wrote in the alternative newspaper about Nashville Bishop David R. Choby, “you’d think he were a cult leader afraid that his flock might actually think for themselves.” The remark was part of a response to a letter the bishop wrote that appeared in the diocesan newspaper the *Tennessee Register*. Bishop Choby, in his letter, said that a pro-abortion theologian, Daniel C. Maguire of Marquette University, was scheduled to speak at a parish without the Bishop’s endorsement. The theologian’s appearance at the parish was later cancelled.

### **May 31**

**New Orleans, LA** – Movie critic Michael Kleinschrodt, in the *Times-Picayune*, provided a list of five movies, in addition to “The Da Vinci Code,” “that got a thumbs-down” from the Catholic Church. Kleinschrodt also provided “What’s not to like,” or reasons why the Church objected to each movie. It’s

unlikely the paper would show a similar disrespect to Muslims or Jews by providing lists of movies they would not like.

## **June 6**

**Washington, DC** – Columnist Richard Cohen in the *Washington Post* wrote that Pope Pius XII was “silent” during the Holocaust and that Father Maximilian Kolbe was an anti-Semitic bigot. Cohen also questioned whether Pope Benedict XVI thought “the Nazis were okay” because the pope, in talking about the Holocaust during a visit to Auschwitz, asked, “Why, Lord did you remain silent?”

In fact, on Christmas Day of both 1941 and 1942, *The New York Times* wrote editorials that praised the pope as a “lonely voice” among an otherwise silent Europe. As for Father Kolbe, another journalist who had, at first, criticized the priest for publishing “an anti-Semitic rag” later retracted this comment, and said Kolbe acted charitably toward Jews. As for Cohen’s comment on Pope Benedict XVI wondering whether the Nazis were okay, this remark was so outrageously indecent that it is better to let it stand without a rejoinder.

## **June 14**

**White Plains, NY** – The *Journal News* printed an article with the headline “Catholic schoolboy, 13, accused of drug possession.” This article, and two follow-up articles on June 15, gratuitously highlighted the fact that the boy and a girl involved in the incident were Catholic.

## **July 20**

**Portland, OR** – The *Portland Tribune* featured an article about the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a self-described “Order of queer nuns” who are really men. The headline of the article read, “Nuns with condoms and fake lashes? Don’t tell the pope!”

## **August 30**

**Rapid City, SD** – An editorial in the *Rapid City Journal* had this to say about Governor Mike Rounds' decision to halt an execution: "With one stroke of the pen, Gov. Rounds managed to satisfy death penalty opponents and his pro-life Catholic base while saying to law-and-order constituents that he favors the death penalty—but it has to [be] done legally." While this may not prove bias, it emitted an unnecessary odor.

## **September 21**

**Wading River, NY** – Wading River Baptist Church began a series of advertisements in the weekly *Community Journal* that attacked the Catholic Church. The first ad on September 21 attacked the pope's authority, saying, "We must remember that New Testament Christianity knows nothing about any ecclesiastical hierarchy consisting of priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, or a pope." The second ad on September 28 questioned the Catholic Church as the interpreter of scripture, saying, "No lay person has the authorization to make a final determination as to the interpretation of the biblical text." The third ad on October 5 questioned the clerical hierarchy of the Catholic Church, writing,

Jesus, in teaching his disciples how to address religious leaders, was saying to them that sinful men are not to be given unwarranted spiritual authority. Nevertheless, Rome has established its own hierarchy consisting of priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and the pope.

## **September 27**

**East Hampton, NY** – The *Independent* printed an article, written by Rick Murphy, about St. John Vianney's heart, and the fact that it was touring different parishes. In the article, Murphy ridiculed the idea of the heart on tour, joking that it may "be opening for the Rolling Stones...." He also wrote, "Bishop William Murphy of the Diocese of Rockville Center [sic] is

scheduled to offer mass while the Heart is on display in Merrick. A spokesman assured there will be no little boys molested during the show.”

## **October 12**

**Philadelphia, PA** – The *Evening Bulletin* ran a syndicated cartoon in which cartoonist Mike Shelton used former Congressman Mark Foley’s disgrace to paint all Catholic priests as sex abusers. The cartoon itself did not surprise us, but *Bulletin* publisher Thomas G. Rice took the extraordinary step of printing an apology in his paper and the Philadelphia Archdiocese’s *Catholic Standard and Times*. He also stated that he was not aware of the cartoon’s content prior to the paper going to press. He nonetheless took responsibility for it appearing in The *Evening Bulletin*.

## **October 18**

Philadelphia, PA – The *Philadelphia Daily News* printed the following letter from a reader:

Recently, I’ve read a number articles reporting how the Catholic faith has been praying for the Amish community. Don’t the Amish have enough difficulties? Isn’t that arguably the equivalent of Charles Manson praying for Gandhi?

The Catholic League dismissed the writer as a typical anti-Catholic bigot. Our concern was rather with the *Daily News*’s decision to print this letter. Since newspapers print letters at their discretion, we wondered if the *Daily News* editors shared this letter writer’s views.

## **October 25, 2006**

**San Francisco, CA** – *San Francisco Chronicle* cartoonist Don Asmussen featured a fake *New York Times* cover story with the headline “Vatican to consider removing saunas from U.S. churches.” Below that, the faux story read, “Pope Benedict

admits the rooms may be 'a thing from another time.'" Accompanying the text was a photo of two scantily clad men.

### **November 7**

Syndicated columnist Dear Abby (Jeanne Phillips) had this to say about a priest who made a remark on a wedding video that the bride found offensive: "I can think of only one excuse for your priest's behavior—he must have had two sips too many of the sacramental wine."

### **November 24**

Syndicated cartoonist Mike Luckovich's comic featured a priest talking to a layman in a church. The priest points to a booth with his right index finger and a door with his left thumb. He says to the layman, "That's the confession booth. This is the closet where we keep the gays." The door where the church "keeps the gays" is overflowing with people.

### **November 26**

*Washington, DC* – *Washington Post Magazine* featured an image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, with the heart replaced by the symbol of the Democratic Party, a donkey.

### **November 29**

*Minneapolis, MN* – In the alternative weekly *City Pages*, Scott Foundas wrote a review of the film "The Nativity Story" titled "Knocked Up." Above the headline was another attention grabber that read, "Conception is far from immaculate in teenybop 'Nativity Story.'" In the article, Foundas wrote, "it's clear that underage moms having babies out of wedlock was no more fashionable back then than it is today, even if the father did happen to be The Father." A picture of Keisha Castle Hughes, the actress who plays Mary, accompanied the article; below the picture was a caption that read "Mary, not quite contrary: Keisha Castle-Hughes in 'The Nativity Story.'"

## **December 1**

**San Francisco, CA** – Columnist Mark Morford, discussing the subject of meat in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, wrote of “all those millions of pounds of ozone-eating methane gasses the cows expel like the Catholic Church pumps out misogyny.”

## **December 2**

**Potsdam, NY** – The *Daily Courier Observer* printed a cartoon by Rick Stromoski that ridicules the Eucharist. In the comic, one boy asks another if he believes that we consume the body and blood of Christ. The other boy answers that it doesn't matter, because his family is vegetarian.

## **December 3**

**Philadelphia, PA** – Carlin Romano, writing in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, accused Pope Benedict XVI, when he visited Turkey, of not condemning the Armenia genocide that took place in Turkey in 1915. He also suggested that the reason the pope did not condemn the genocide is because the victims were “non-Catholic Christians.” In fact, the pope made mention of “very tragic circumstances such as those experienced in the last century” without getting too specific. He did this because, as Patriarch Mesrob II said, “It would have been a huge headache for us” if the pope used the term “genocide.” Romano's comments in the *Inquirer* smacked of pure ignorance.

## **December 20**

**Washington, DC** – Harold Meyerson wrote the following about Pope John Paul II in the *Washington Post*:

John Paul also sought to build his church in nations of the developing world where traditional morality and bigotry, most especially on matters sexual, were in greater supply than in secular Europe and the increasingly egalitarian United States, and more in sync with the Catholic Church's inimitable

backwardness.

This statement smacked of elitism, anti-Catholicism and racism.

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## RADIO

### **January 25**

*Trenton, NJ* – Craig Carton and Ray Rossi, hosts of the “Jersey Guys” radio show on WKXW (105.1 FM), discussed a group of Catholic high school students who protested the opening of a strip club in their neighborhood. The hosts suggested bringing the boys to the strip club and dressing the strippers like nuns. One of the hosts mentioned a stripper doing something sexual with Rosary beads. They also suggested selling Communion wafers at the strip club for \$2 a hit and giving out all the red wine people can drink. After a letter from the Catholic League, the station’s program director admitted the radio hosts were out of line and stated that he instructed them not to make such comments in the future.

### **March 28**

Syndicated talk-show host Michael Savage said the Catholic Church is pro-immigration because it needed to “bring in people from the Third World who are still gullible enough to sit there and listen to the molesters.” He also said that the church needed to “import dummies.”

Bill Donohue was scheduled to appear on Savage’s radio show that day. During the pre-interview (a half hour before Savage’s comments on the church), Donohue let a producer know he did not share Savage’s position. The producer, after checking with Savage, told Donohue he would not appear on the show. Days later, Savage spent the better part of an hour discussing Donohue’s response to the radio host’s tirade.

## **April 5**

On his CBS radio show, Penn Jillette said that Mother Teresa “had this weird kink that I think was sexual” about seeing people suffer and die. He also said, “Paris Hilton is so far above Mother Teresa on the moral scale.” Jillette made the comments in reply to a rumor that Hilton might play Mother Teresa in a movie. The Catholic League demanded that CBS Radio fire Jillette, warned that CBS needed to protect its reputation and had better take some disciplinary action. Bill Donohue then had a confidential discussion with CBS officials, after which he said it’s highly unlikely the problem would need revisiting.

## **April 5**

**Los Angeles, CA** – Al Rantel on his KABC radio program said of Los Angeles Archbishop Roger Cardinal Mahony, “Cardinal Phony pretends he’s interested in social justice for Mexicans, when all Mahony wants is to fill the pews with people who will fill the Church’s coffers to pay for pedophilia.” He was referring to Cardinal Mahony calling for a day of fasting and prayer over the immigration issue.

## **April 7**

**Los Angeles, CA** – Rob Nelson, a substitute host for Al Rantel on KABC radio, talked about Archbishop Roger Cardinal Mahony’s call for a day of fasting and prayer. He said that Mahony was a phony and that the Church is hypocritical. He also stated that if Jesus were to come back to earth, the first thing that he would do is destroy the Catholic Church.

## **August 25**

In an interview with Associated Press Radio, actor-producer Rob Reiner spoke of Mel Gibson’s anti-Semitic remarks after being arrested on suspicion of drunk driving. Reiner used the drunken incident to label Gibson’s work as anti-Semitic. He

said Gibson must acknowledge that "his work reflects anti-Semitism," particularly "The Passion of the Christ." Reiner also said,

When he comes to the understanding that he has done that, and can come out and say, you know, "My views have been reflected in my work and I feel bad that I've done that," then that will be the beginning of some reconciliation for him.

### **November 3, 2006**

On the "Opie & Anthony Show," co-hosts Opie, Anthony and Jim Norton were discussing the movie "A League of Their Own," specifically the character "All The Way Mae," who in the movie is implied to be promiscuous. Opie mentioned that his great aunt Mae played in the real All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. Jim Norton then described Opie's great aunt having sex in an alley. Opie also mentioned this aunt has been a nun her whole life. Norton followed with another description of a sexual encounter, saying that was the reason Opie's aunt became a nun.

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## TELEVISION

### **January 5**

The NBC medical drama "ER" aired an episode titled "If Not Now" about a 15 year-old girl who was raped and became pregnant. Her parents were pro-life and believed she should carry the baby to term. The girl consulted with a Catholic doctor, named Doctor Kovach, at the hospital. Another doctor believed they should have someone else counsel the girl, someone who isn't Catholic. After thinking it over, Dr. Kovach concluded that the girl should have an abortion. He inserted a device into the girl that aborted the baby, and urged her to tell her parents that she miscarried. The girl asked the doctor if what she did was a sin and he told her that it was

not. As he inserted the device, Dr. Kovach quoted the Bible in an attempt to reassure her that there is no life before birth.

### **January 6**

The comedy/drama "The Book of Daniel" debuted on NBC. The show chronicled the life of an Episcopal priest addicted to painkillers. The priest's family included a wife who was a drunk, a drug-dealing daughter, a homosexual son, another son who was a womanizer, a bisexual sister-in-law, a thieving brother-in-law, and the priest's father who was an adulterer. A Catholic priest had ties to the mafia. Jack Kenny, a self-described "recovering Catholic," wrote the show. The program was canceled after only four episodes.

### **February 14**

The ABC program "Boston Legal" featured a girl who was raped and became pregnant. She sued the Catholic hospital that treated her because it denied her emergency contraception. Thus did she invite the state to trump Catholic doctrinal prerogatives.

### **March 12**

A Carlos Mencia standup comedy special that aired on Comedy Central featured a 20-foot-tall marionette of a lollipop-holding, pedophile priest as the backdrop of the stage. Mencia also delivered a five-minute monologue on the pope going to heaven and engaging in bizarre sexual practices. Mencia began his rant with this comment: "The pope is in heaven finally getting some good

p-sy."

During Mencia's special, a commercial aired for the new season of his program "Mind of Mencia" on Comedy Central. It depicted a priest sitting on a park bench reading a Bible. A group of Boy Scouts walked by and the priest stared at them. Mencia was

seated next to the priest on the bench and turned to him after the Boy Scouts walked off with a disgusted look on his face. As Mencia opened his mouth to make a comment a voiceover said: "Warning: The contents of Carlos Mencia's mind may contain jokes about religious figures and their hobbies. Not recommended for people who write hate mail. You think it, Carlos says it."

### **March 13**

On the NBC program, "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," host Jay Leno associated the Catholic Church with accused child molester Michael Jackson. Leno stated: "Last week authorities shut down Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch. Hey guys, what's the hurry? You thought FEMA was slow to respond to a crisis. More bad news, you know who bought it? The Catholic Church."

### **March 22**

The second season of the Comedy Central program "Mind of Mencia" began with the show's host, Carlos Mencia, in a confessional asking for forgiveness for making fun of everyone last season. He told the "priest" that he did not want to do the same thing this year. The "priest" told him that there is nothing to forgive and that God loves him. The "priest" said that God was even a big fan of his. Mencia asked if God got mad when he "makes fun of beaners, crackers and big fat whores." The "priest" told him that God made those big fat whores and thought that Mencia could go even further in his mockery. Mencia asked, "In the name of God?" And the "priest" answered "yes." Mencia said, "This is the s-t [Then he made the sign of the cross]. I am a mother-f-ing messenger of God. It's on b-ch. Season two." After Mencia left the confessional, the priest's door opened, revealing the devil. The devil said, "I can't believe he bought that s-t."

### **March 28**

The NBC sitcom "Scrubs" featured a Catholic priest character

who said he was pro-choice. During the show a doctor yelled out "abort the babies." When the doctor later apologized to the priest for making the statement, the priest responded, "That is ok, I am pro-choice."

### **March 31**

VH1's program "Best Week Ever" included a skit called "Father 90210," in which comedian Greg Fitzsimmons played a Catholic priest who heard the confessions of celebrities. After asking Sharon Stone (the footage of Stone was from the film "Basic Instinct 2") to cross her legs, Father 90210 said, "I'm not even gonna ask what you did with those rosary beads." Father 90210 advised Jessica Simpson to "adopt a mile of highway" instead of adopting children. Lastly, after Paris Hilton confessed "to everything," Father 90210 verbally reprimanded her, using expletives that were edited out. None of the celebrities were present for the skit and did not participate in the show.

### **April 10**

World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) Chairman Vince McMahon ridiculed religion in an episode of the WWE program "Raw." McMahon, among many offenses, tried to wash his hands with holy water and came up with his own list of commandments, which included, "I am the boss. There are no other bosses before me." On an April 17 broadcast of "Raw," McMahon announced that he had created his own religion called McMahonism, the idea that Vince McMahon is the lord, master and god of all sports entertainment.

### **April 21**

The History Channel aired a documentary in which Pope Pius XII is falsely accused of doing virtually nothing to help Jews and those who opposed the Nazis in two separate incidents in Rome during World War II.

## **May**

The Documentary Channel aired "Women In Black" throughout the month. The documentary has been described as "a kaleidoscope of baby boomers' memories" with adults describing "childhood experiences of physical and psychological punishment during their education by Catholic nuns, especially in the Fifties and Sixties." Claudia Sherwood, who directed the film, said she actually "became ill at times when research required me to contact the archdiocese, a nun or clergy." Additionally, a Catholic League member notified us that he saw this same documentary on the Discovery Channel in December.

## **May**

Cable television channel A&E aired a documentary based on the work of Simon Cox, an author who had researched the "facts" behind Dan Brown's novel Angels & Demons. The documentary, which was aired three times, is filled with lies and inaccuracies about the Catholic Church and Jesus. The people interviewed for the documentary claim, among other things, that the Catholic Church teaches that Peter was the first person to see Jesus when he rose from the dead (the Church does not teach that), the church is anti-science (in fact, no institution has contributed more to science than the Catholic Church) and "would still kill Galileo today" (Galileo was not killed). Had A&E accessed serious scholars, these embarrassing errors would have been avoided.

## **May 3**

Standup comedian Carlos Mencia, in his weekly Comedy Central program "Mind of Mencia," performed a History Channel-type spoof depicting Jesus's life if he had married Mary Magdalene. Among the scenes depicted: Jesus returning to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection and Mary claiming Jesus cheated on him.

## **June 9**

The Catholic League received an e-mail message about a cable access program that discusses where the Catholic Church has "gone wrong." The program "What Every Catholic Should Know" is hosted by former Catholic priest Richard Bennett and was available in 13 cities around the U.S. According to a website for the program, the show's goal is to "simply call the Roman Catholic individual to examine carefully the contradictions between the Bible and the Catholic Catechism."

### **June 13**

On NBC's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," host Jay Leno made the following joke regarding Jack Black in the movie "Nacho Libre": "He plays a priest who moonlights as a wrestler. Well, that's got to be every altar boy's worst nightmare."

### **June 19**

ABC's "World News Tonight" aired a report that led viewers to believe eight women would be ordained Catholic priests. The focal point of the story was the Episcopal Church electing its first female presiding bishop. In ABC's coverage, the story included the following:

Most evangelical denominations and the Catholic Church steadfastly refuse to ordain women. However, that is changing. In late July, Joan Clark Hauk [sic], a grandmother from Pennsylvania, will be ordained as a Catholic priest, along with seven other women. It will be the first ceremony of its kind in this country, but one the Vatican will not condone.

The problem with this report was that it gave Houk's "ordination" credence, which it did not deserve. The Catholic League sent a letter to ABC News requesting that ABC make an on-air clarification. On June 21, we received a letter from Greg Macek, associate director of news practices at ABC News. His letter, while respectful, was not satisfactory: he disputed the Catholic League's view, saying he didn't think the story was skewed.

## **July 17**

On NBC's "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno," host Jay Leno said in his opening monologue, "Paris Hilton announced that she was going to be celibate for an entire year... Celibate for a year. That is longer than most Catholic priests."

## **July 31**

*Village Voice* writer Michael Musto, as a guest on MSNBC's "Countdown with Keith Olbermann," commented on Mel Gibson's drunken, anti-Semitic remarks about Jews subsequent to an arrest. Musto was not content to simply criticize Gibson's behavior. He took the opportunity to lash out at Christians when he said, "He doesn't work with anybody else, and his audience is already deeply anti-Semitic, so they're deeply proud of him after this."

## **August 2**

Comedy Central re-broadcast a South Park episode titled "Bloody Mary." The particular episode centers on a statue of the Virgin Mary "bleeding out her ass" and spraying people with the blood. In December of last year, an executive vice president at Comedy Central told the Catholic League that there were no plans for the cable channel to re-air "Bloody Mary."

## **August 13**

On the HBO comedy "Lucky Louie," a priest absolves Louie of his sins in a confessional even though he knows Louie is not Catholic. When Louie is told to stop eating in church, he responds, "They are all up there eating Jesus, why can't I have this?"

## **August 15**

In an episode of the FX drama "Rescue Me," Tommy (played by Denis Leary) comes home to discover his roommate Lou has had

sex with a nun. Lou tells Tommy, "She's only been with two other guys. One was some clown way back in high school, and the other is, you know [covers his mouth and muffles the next word], Jesus." Lou tells Tommy that the nun is leaving the order at the end of the month. Tommy asks if that means the nun is cheating on Jesus with Lou. Lou responds, "I got a hundred pounds on the guy and look [holds up his hands], no holes in my hands. Bring it on, Jesus!"

### **September 9**

NBC began airing the children's animated television show "Veggie Tales," which tells Biblical stories with vegetables for characters, with references to God and the Bible removed.

### **September 12**

Actress-comedienne Rosie O'Donnell, in just her sixth show as co-host of ABC's "The View," said, "Radical Christianity is just as threatening as radical Islam in a country like America where we have separation of church and state."

### **September 20**

KFI radio host Bill Handel made the following remark on Glenn Beck's television show on CNN Headline News, when asked if he was "coming out" (revealing he was gay): "No, I'm not coming out. Listen, let me tell you. No, I'm not. I've never been an altar boy. I've never had the experience."

### **September 28**

On ABC's "The View," Rosie O'Donnell made fun of the Catholic Church's teaching on receiving the Eucharist. She said

Oh, well it was big because my mother used to say when you have that Host in your mouth don't let it touch your teeth because it was against (inaudible) so you know the pressure on the child getting it, you know the priest would put it right on your tongue [Rosie twists her face pretending to swallow it

without having it touch her teeth].

What happened on the show was not an extension of "Sister Act" comedy—it was a below-the-belt attack on Catholicism.

### **September 30**

On the Fox program "Mad TV," a skit used the pope's address at the University of Regensburg to smear the Catholic Church. In the skit, a child (played by an adult) reads a newscast, while crayon drawings are shown. The child reads, "Daddy says the pope said those things because he's a celebrit [sic] and has blue balls which make you frustrated. Daddy also says there's plenty of love to go around the Catholic Church." During this last line, a drawing of a priest between two altar boys is shown. The picture that followed showed the altar boys not wearing any pants.

### **October 1**

The British Broadcasting Company (BBC) aired a documentary that accused Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) of covering up sexual abuse in the priesthood for 20 years. The documentary also claimed Cardinal Ratzinger was in charge of enforcing a 1962 Vatican document that was allegedly written to cover up these crimes. Cardinal Ratzinger was, in fact, not put in charge of investigating the sexual abuse scandal until after it broke in 2002. In addition, the 1962 document imposed harsher penalties on priests who in any way make a sexual advance. The document also penalized anyone who learned of sexual abuse and did not inform the bishop within 30 days. In essence, the documentary warranted an apology from the BBC for its false claims.

### **October 2**

On ABC's "The View," Rosie O'Donnell falsely claimed, "the person who was in charge of investigating all the allegations of pedophiles in the Catholic Church from the eighties until

just recently was guess who. The current pope.” She said her source was the movie “Deliver Us From Evil.”

### **October 5**

On an episode of the ABC television show “Ugly Betty,” Betty’s family watched a Spanish-language soap opera. In the soap opera, a pregnant woman and a priest passionately kissed and touched each other. The priest was holding a Bible and a rosary in one hand. The pregnant woman pulled back, slapped the priest, and said (in Spanish) “I am naming him after his father... Father!” The priest made the sign of the cross and said something in Spanish. The pregnant woman then grabbed the priest and they returned to their kissing and touching.

### **October 6**

On CNN’s “American Morning,” cartoonist Mike Luckovich was interviewed. The interview began with a conversation about the Mark Foley scandal. During his exchange with anchor Miles O’Brien, one of Luckovich’s cartoons was shown, and the cartoonist said,

The new pope wanted to—wants to ban homosexual priests, so you are going to have to lose 80 percent of the priesthood if that happens. But—so I’ve got a bishop here saying—he’s looking down at his vestments, and he’s saying, “ Does this make me look gay?”

Luckovich also said, “I was thinking about maybe making [Speaker of the House] Denny Hastert maybe like an archbishop and somehow, you know, making the comparison that way.” Hastert, during this time, had been accused of knowing about disgraced congressman Mark Foley’s inappropriate e-mail messages to Congressional pages and not doing anything about it.

### **October 10**

On an episode of the ABC drama "Boston Legal," a homeless man was on trial for cremating his friend and eating a portion of that friend's leg. During the trial, the homeless man's lawyer says,

One billion and half Christians routinely go to church on Sundays and ceremoniously eat the body of Christ. Drink his blood. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him. Jesus said that.

The judge responded, "How dare you take the Holy Sacrament literally?" The judge also said, "You have acquainted it with a vile and despicable act." The lawyer responded, "I apologize your honor. I certainly don't mean to indict Holy Communion."

### **October 12**

On ABC's "The View," Joy Behar had this to say about Mel Gibson, following his interview on "Good Morning America" during which he discussed his drunken, anti-Semitic remarks: "I can't stand him. [To co-host Barbara Walters] You should do a special, 'The Ten People You Will Meet In Hell.'" Behar also referred to "The Passion of the Christ" as "a somewhat anti-Semitic movie." She said Gibson "needs to be taken out of show business." When Walters read a letter from a viewer pointing out that it's okay to say bad things about Catholics and Christians, but not okay to say anything bad about Jews, Behar replied, "You can arouse people's anti-Semitic feelings very easily and it is not like just a joke. It becomes 'Lets round them up and kill them.'"

### **October 19**

NBC announced it would cut Madonna's "mock crucifixion" segment from the singer's concert special. NBC decided to make this edit after pressure of a boycott. On September 29, a letter was sent to NBC Universal Chairman and CEO Bob Wright by Brent Bozell, president of the Parents Television Council, and Bill Donohue, warning Wright that they would organize a

boycott of one of the sponsors of the concert special if the "Mock Crucifixion" part were not excised. In addition to the Catholic League and the Parents Television Council, the following groups said they would have joined the boycott: American Family Association, Morley Institute, Christian Film and Television Commission, Jews Against Anti-Christian Defamation, Traditional Values Coalition and Women Influencing the Nation.

### **October 19**

On an episode of the CBS drama "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation" (the episode was titled "Double Cross"), a woman was found crucified in a church. A priest admitted to having had sex with the victim and said he was responsible for the woman's death, but did not kill her. The priest later admitted to killing the woman, but Gil Grissom, the lead investigator, didn't believe him. When told that the priest confessed to the murder, Grissom responded, "He is a Catholic. They are full of guilt." It is later revealed that another person, not the priest, committed the murder.

### **October 27**

Amy Berg, the producer of the film "Deliver Us From Evil" (about a predatory, pedophilic former priest), was a guest on ABC's "The View." Co-host Joy Behar stated that priests guilty of molestation were pedophiles and not gays, ignoring data to the contrary. Another lie (or mistake) occurred when co-host Rosie O'Donnell and Berg concurred, "The current pope was the person who was supposed to investigate these charges of sex abuse in the Church in the last 20 years."

### **October 31**

On ABC's "The View", the co-hosts discussed the fate of someone who acts in a pornographic movie. Joy Behar said, "In my day if you had done a porno flick, you would not have a career. You would have ended up at the Sisters of the Mary

Magdalene.” She added, “They put you away in a home. Now you become a big star.”

### **November 5**

In an episode of CBS’s “Without A Trace,” a girl was missing after a priest performed an exorcism of her. One FBI agent who was assigned to investigate the case stated he believed in turning himself over to a higher power but not in the hocus pocus of exorcisms. It was later discovered that the priest and the exorcism had nothing to do with the girl’s disappearance.

### **November 8**

On ABC’s “The View,” co-host Elisabeth Hasselbeck demonstrated one of the rules of hunting by stretching her arms out. Co-host Joy Behar commented, “Notice the Christ-like position she puts herself in.”

### **November 14**

On the Fox News television program “The O’Reilly Factor,” host Bill O’Reilly responded to a comment by a cardinal from the Vatican regarding immigration. Cardinal Renato Martino used the word “inhuman” to describe the idea of putting up walls along the United States-Mexican border. In covering this story, O’Reilly said that “the Vatican is calling the proposed fence on the southern border inhuman.” As he said this, a picture of the pope was shown on the screen. O’Reilly was incorrect in attributing what Cardinal Martino said to the Vatican. O’Reilly also said “the Vatican needs to wise up or shut up.” Simply disagreeing with the Vatican would not warrant entry in the Catholic League’s Annual Report, but disrespectfulness such as this is another matter.

### **November 15**

On the website for ABC’s “Good Morning America,” a poll was

posted that asked, "Should Catholic Priests Be Allowed to Marry?" The poll was open to anyone, thus allowing non-Catholics to voice their opinions on an internal stricture of the Catholic Church. The Catholic League responded by releasing its own poll asking people of all backgrounds, "Should Orthodox Jews Be Allowed to Eat Ham Sandwiches?" and "Should Muslim Women Be Allowed to Wear Mini Skirts?" We asked that people send their responses to the supervising producer of "Good Morning America."

## **November 22**

New York, NY – On the WNYE program "Backdrop NYC," the short film "Jesus Henry Christ" was shown. The film is about a Catholic school that suppressed the ideas of one of its students; the student expressed the idea that Karl Marx was a hero. The student was sent to the school's principal, a priest, who proceeded to paddle the boy. The speaker system in the principal's office transmitted the paddling for the entire school to hear.

## **December 24**

Comedy Central featured a series of shows and movies they called "Sacrilicious Sunday." Included in the day's events were the movies "40 Days and 40 Nights" (about a Catholic who is ridiculed for giving up sex for Lent), "Dogma" (which, among other things, has a descendent of Jesus working in an abortion clinic) and "Superstar" (a Catholic school student is convinced she smells bad). Also included in the lineup was Carlos Mencia, the comedian who did a show on the sex life of Pope John Paul II in heaven.

## **December 25**

The Cartoon Network aired a special Christmas episode of the show "Moral Orel." In this episode, Orel believes his brother Shapey is the second coming of Jesus Christ. During one part of the show, Shapey trashes a nativity scene. Orel, seeing the

Jesus statue lying on the sidewalk, trashes the rest of the nativity.

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## Pope's critics unload

On September 12, Pope Benedict XVI lectured at the University of Regensburg in Germany. During this lecture, he quoted a 14th century Byzantine emperor who said, "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Although the subject of the pope's address was the necessity of recognizing the centrality of faith and reason in the modern world, for many the point was lost.

Benedict's critics did not hold back in their statements. The following are the worst of the worst:

- September 14, Ali Bardakoglu, head of Turkey's Directorate General for Religious Affairs, told NTV (Turkey): "The remarks reflect the hatred in his heart. It is a statement full of enmity and grudge. It is a prejudiced and biased approach.
- September 14, Aiman Mazyek, president of Germany's Central Council of Muslims, quoted in *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* (Germany): "After the bloodstained conversions in South America, the crusades in the Muslim world, the coercion of the Church by Hitler's regime, and even the coining of the phrase 'holy war' by Pope Urban II, I do not think the Church should point a finger at extremist activities in other religions."
- September 15, Kamal Habib, Islamic researcher, quoted in

the *New York Post*: "It looks as if the Vatican is providing the religious justification for the wars waged in Iraq and Afghanistan."

- September 15, Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami in a sermon broadcast on Iranian state radio: "Definitely, Muslims around the world have reacted and will react properly to these weak-minded remarks."
- September 16, Jaish al-Mujahedeen (the Mujahedeen's Army) statement quoted by Agence France-Presse: "We swear that we will destroy their cross in the heart of Rome ... and that their Vatican will be hit and wept over by the pope." The statement lashed out at "Zionised Christians and loathsome crusaders" and featured six films showing attacks against U.S. military targets in Iraq and which it said were "dedicated to the dog of the crusaders [an apparent reference to the pope] in retaliation for his remarks. We will not rest until your thrones and your crosses have been destroyed on your own territory."
- September 16, Professor Hans Kung in *The Times* (London): "He can of course quote what he wants, but he did this without saying the emperor was incorrect. This shows the limits of the theologian Joseph Ratzinger. He never studied the religions thoroughly and obviously has a unilateral view of Islam and the other religions."
- September 16, Imam Kadhim Mohamad, quoted in the *Daily News* (New York): "He is declaring war by his words. He should either apologize or at least prove to the people that what he says is true. Otherwise, he should say nothing."
- September 16, Bash Pharoan, president of the Baltimore chapter of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, quoted in *The Baltimore Sun*: "By him spreading misinformation, it really is a green light for

other people to discriminate or commit acts of hatred against Muslims.”

- September 16, a statement from imprisoned Islamist leaders in Britain, quoted by Agence France-Presse: “... now the tyrant of Rome reveals his charlatanism and his calumny. Oh Muslims, rejoice in your victory. Your enemy has no more excuses against their destruction and ruin.”
- September 17, Yasir Abu-Hilalah in *Al-Dustur* (Jordan): “Rather than preoccupying himself with differences with Muslims, the Pope should preoccupy himself with his community in the West, especially in Germany where his statements were made. The Nazis were Catholics, and those responsible for the holocaust, which became the only sacred and untouchable issue in the West, were not Muslims. Those who killed millions of people in two world wars were not Muslims. The sentiments of Nazism are growing in the West and there is nothing more ethical to deter it than religion.”
- September 17, *Al-Dustur* editorial: “The Islamic rage is justified, and we support all invitations that call on the Pope to apologize immediately and unconditionally to erase the blazing Islamic anger and to protect the relationship of mutual respect between the Islamic and Christian religions, within the framework of dialogue and understanding among religions.”
- September 17, Asaeb al-Iraq al-Jihadiya (League of Jihadists in Iraq), quoted by Agence France-Presse: “Know that the soldiers of Muhammed will come sooner or later to shake your throne and the foundations of your state.”
- September 17, John Cornwell in the *Sunday Times* (London): “The church and the papacy in particular have long had problems with the existence of other religions, let alone tolerance of them. It started with

the crusades in the early Middle Ages, continued with the Reformation (the memory dies hard that the Guy Fawkes plot was a Catholic conspiracy to destroy the establishment of Protestant England). Through the 19th century the popes set their faces against the notion of religious freedom and separation of church and state. A succession of pontiffs, notably Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), declared that respect for other religions was a form of 'insanity.'

- September 17, Iranian cleric Ahmed Khatami, quoted in the *Turkish Daily News*: "The pope should fall on his knees before a senior Muslim cleric and try to understand Islam... Muslim outcries will continue until he fully regrets his remarks."
- September 18, militant group Ansar al-Sunnah (Partisans of the Precepts of the Prophet), quoted in Agence France-Presse: A statement from the group called the pope "Satan's hellhound in the Vatican... The day is coming when the armies of Islam will destroy the ramparts of Rome."
- September 18, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, quoted by the Associated Press: "Those who take benefit from [the] pope's comment and drive their own arrogant policies should be targeted [sic] of attack and protest."
- September 18, Christopher Hitchens on Slate.com: "... where Muslims believe that Mohammed went into a trance and took dictation from an archangel, Ratzinger accepts as true the equally preposterous legend that St. Paul was commanded to evangelize for Christ during the course of a vision experienced in a dream."
- September 19, Imam Hassan Qazwini of the Islamic Center of America on CNN's "Newsroom": "Well, no doubt that there are fringe groups in the Muslim world who are

fanatic and who are violent. I don't deny that. As there are Christian groups. Hitler was Catholic, also."

- September 19, Huda Guidance Army Organization in a statement quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*: "We will target all Crusaders in the Gaza Strip until the pope issues an official apology. All centers belonging to Crusaders, including churches and institutions, will from now on be targeted. We will even attack the Crusaders as they sit intoxicated in their homes." The group said preparations had been completed "to strike at every Crusader and infidel on the purified land of Palestine."
- September 19, Mohammad Qaddafi, son of Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi, quoted by Agence France-Presse: "If this person were really someone reasonable, he would not agree to remain at his post one minute but would convert to Islam immediately."
- September 20, Arnaud de Borchgrave in the *Washington Times*: "The pope was not defining a doctrine about faith and morals where infallibility reigns. But it was more than off the cuff and less than a papal bull. Benedict was also a little wide of the mark. Any foreign policy adviser could have informed the pope that what he planned to say would be seen by Muslims as a force multiplier for extremists..."
- September 21, About 1,000 Muslim clerics and religious scholars in Pakistan, in a statement quoted by the Associated Press: The group said Benedict "should be removed from his position immediately for encouraging war and fanning hostility between various faiths" and "making insulting remarks" against Islam. The group added that the "pope, and all infidels, should know that no Muslim, under circumstances, can tolerate an insult to the Prophet (Muhammad). ... If the west does not change its stance regarding Islam, it will face severe

consequences.”

- September 22, Hafiz Hussain Ahmed, a senior Mutahida Majlis-e-Amal leader, quoted by the Associated Press: “If I get hold of the pope, I will hang him.”
- September 22, Sheik Abu Saqer, leader of Gaza’s Jihadia Salafiya Islamic outreach movement, quoted by WorldNetDaily: “The day will soon come when the green flag of La Illah Illah Allah (There is no god but Allah) and Muhammad Rasul Allah (Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah) will be raised upon the Vatican and all around the world and on the fortresses of those who want to destroy Islam, because they know that this religion obliges them to face the truth that Islam is Allah’s favorite religion. And until they join Islam, hell is their last station.”
- September 23, Mujahedeen Army, in an online statement addressed to “you dog in Rome,” quoted in the Los Angeles Daily News: “We swear to God to send you people who adore death as much as you adore life.”
- September 25, James Carroll in the *Boston Globe*: “Pope Benedict XVI celebrated the fifth anniversary of 9/11 by citing, on the next day, a 14th-century slur that Mohammed brought ‘things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.’ The patently false characterization of Mohammed’s teaching, displaying an ignorance of the Koran, of the magnificence of Islamic devotion, and of history was offered almost as an aside in the pope’s otherwise esoteric lecture about reason and faith.”
- September 26, Alberty Yelda, Iraqi Ambassador to the Holy See, quoted by Agence France-Presse: “Many Muslims around the world were offended. They expressed their feelings and they were right to do so. They demonstrated anger.”

- September 27, Sheik Abu Saqer, quoted by WorldNetDaily: "The call for so-called dialogue by this little racist pope is a Trojan horse with the main goal of reaching a new system in which the ideals [of Christianity] are a new ideology that will rule relations between nations and people. The dialogue he wants is dangerous."
- September 30, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qaida's second in command, in a video statement quoted by the Associated Press: "If Benedict attacked us, we will respond to his insults with good things. We will call upon him and all of the Christians to become Muslims who do not recognize the Trinity or the crucifixion."
- September 30, Imam Seyyed Hasan Ameli, in a sermon quoted by Iranian Labor News Agency: "Their insolence has reached such a level that they are turning Mosques into Churches or even to sheds for keeping ritually unclean animals in order to defy Muslims."



(photo credit: Associated Press)

While many used harsh words to criticize Pope Benedict XVI's remarks at Regensburg, others went a step further, and took to the streets.

On September 15, about 2,000 Palestinians protested in Gaza City. In Cairo, 100 demonstrators stood outside a mosque and shouted, "OH CRUSADERS, OH COWARDS! DOWN WITH THE POPE!"

On September 16, five churches in the West Bank and Gaza were attacked. At least five firebombs hit an Anglican church in Nablus, and its door was set on fire. A Greek Orthodox church was also firebombed. Later that day, four masked gunmen attacked the city's Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic churches. The gunmen set the front doors of both buildings on fire and struck both churches with bullets. In Gaza City,

militants shot at a Greek Orthodox church. A day earlier, explosive devices were set off at the church, causing minor damage.

On September 17, churches were again vandalized. A 170-year-old church in the West Bank town of Tul Karem was torched, and a smaller church in another town was partly burned.

That same day, several hundred theology students were given the day off to protest in Qum, Iran's center for religious study.

Also on September 17, outside the Catholic Westminster Cathedral, protesters held placards reading, "POPE GO TO HELL." The protesters displayed other slogans aimed at Christians in general, including "JESUS IS THE SLAVE OF ALLAH."

One of the worst incidents also occurred on September 17, when a 65-year-old nun who worked at a pediatrics hospital in Somalia was shot and killed while leaving the hospital.

On September 18, more than 100 people rallied in front of a Vatican Embassy in Jakarta, waving banners that said, "THE POPE IS BUILDING RELIGION ON HATRED."

In Islamabad on September 22, protesters held up placards, reading "TERRORIST, EXTREMIST POPE BE HANGED!" and "DOWN WITH MUSLIMS' ENEMIES!" Addressing the gathering, a leader of a coalition of six Islamic parties said, "If I get a hold of the pope, I will hang him."

On October 9, an Orthodox priest's body was found beheaded in Mosul, Iraq. Relatives of the priest said the group demanded, in addition to a ransom, that the priest's church condemn Pope Benedict's remarks.

*Protesters couldn't get their hands on the pope, so they did what they thought was the next best thing. As pictured below,*

*they burned effigies of the pontiff*

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***The Catholic League and Jews Against Anti-Christian Defamation placed the following ad in the Washington Times on September 25, 2006.***



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## **The War on Christmas**

**Activists:**



- A curmudgeon in Warwick, New York, kicked up a fuss about a “Breakfast with Santa” fundraiser held each year by the PTA of Sanfordville Elementary School. One parent claimed that the popular fundraiser, which is held on a Saturday and is completely optional, is offensive to non-Christians because it includes a visit from Santa Claus. In an attempt to accommodate the parent’s concerns, the PTA agreed to change the name of the event to “Winter Wonderland Breakfast” and incorporate Hanukkah traditions among the activities. This, however, did not satisfy the parent who still took issue with the fundraiser, saying, “This shouldn’t be just for one person or two person’s religions... I wanted to represent all, not just a few.” The superintendent of Warwick schools had amiably offered to don a Frosty the Snowman suit in an attempt to add more winter-themed characters to the breakfast. His generosity, though, was not rewarded. He received a letter from a local attorney charging that, “The District should, at a minimum, modify the events to avoid potential litigation.” The

superintendent later indicated that he should have seen the problem with a "Breakfast with Santa" earlier on.

- American Atheists, Inc. of Connecticut petitioned officials in the Town of Griswold to end a practice by which the government plays music from speakers connected to the top of a local church. Ten years ago, the local government purchased the sound system and worked out an agreement with the church, whereby the church allowed the government to install the system in the steeple. Throughout the years, the music of bells has been emitted from the speakers. During the Christmas season, secular songs as well as religious songs like "Away in a Manger" have been on rotation. American Atheists took offense to the music, and demanded that the local government sell the speakers to the church, and then proceed to monitor the volume of the music. As one man complained, "It's against the Constitution... It needs to be silenced."
- The ACLU of Tennessee filed a new lawsuit against the Wilson County School System. The ACLU had accused Lakeview Elementary School in Mt. Juliet of improperly endorsing religion. Among the problems the group had with the school is that at a past Christmas pageant, students role-played the birth of Christ and sang the songs "Away in a Manger" and "Joy to the World."
- ACLU of Idaho Executive Director Jack Van Valkenburgh criticized Wal-Mart for wishing shoppers a Merry Christmas. Van Valkenburgh had this to say of the retailer: "I think it's a little insensitive personally and I think it would be better if they had a more inclusive message."
- Americans United for Separation of Church and State Executive Director Barry Lynn charged Wal-Mart with showing religious bias by acknowledging the Christmas

holiday. Lynn seems to think that non-Christians are intolerant of others and will be unable to stomach seeing Christians celebrate their faith. He said of the retail giant, "they are really making a statement that non-Christians should probably go elsewhere this holiday season."

## **Education:**

- Student Affairs leaders at Northeastern University in Boston called the campus's Christmas tree a "holiday tree."
- Administrators at New Jersey's Bear Tavern School banned not only religious decorations, such as the crèche and the menorah, but secular decorations like Santa Claus and Christmas trees as well. The principal released four new guidelines:
  - *1) All December parties need to be winter celebrations and not celebrations of holidays.*
  - *2) All holiday decorations should be changed in favor of winter decorations. Santa Claus, Christmas trees and menorahs are all holiday-specific decorations.*
  - *3) The holiday sing along will be discontinued as it has been at other schools. If anyone has a suggestion for an alternative, please let me know.*
  - *4) Films shown on the last day before break should not be about the holidays and should be curriculum-related*
- The superintendent of New York State's Goshen School District was so afraid of offending rabid secularists that he banned religious music from school concerts. Explaining that even if a diverse array of music representing many religions was performed, the superintendent said atheists would still be offended. He stated, "Our concerts mix classical pieces with secular

winter songs.... We are not representing any holiday."The superintendent admitted that his policy was unpopular, and explained: "Unfortunately, we try very hard not to offend people, but in our attempt not to offend, we offend people. We try to encompass and be sensitive to everyone's wishes. By doing that, we offend others." He offered no explanation as to why a small minority of grumps must be appeased, while the majority of people who have no problem with most religious celebrations (of their own faith or of another faith) are not worthy of consideration.

- Many of Virginia's public schools refused to acknowledge Christmas on their calendars. According to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "A spot check of calendars for 40 school systems (of the state's 134) found only five rural counties still using the terms 'Christmas holiday' or 'Christmas break.'"
- Management of Crane Middle School in Yuma, Arizona was so afraid of offending someone that they stripped holiday celebrations of any meaning. The school didn't focus on any particular event, whether secular or religious. As the principal explained, "It's a festive time, but we just try to be festive—not in a religious sense." She offered no explanation for what makes the end of December such a festive time.
- The principal of Ohio's New Albany Intermediate Elementary School ordered "Silent Night" and "Hoyo, Haya" (a Hanukkah song) removed from a student concert. One parent had complained about the line "Christ the Savior is born" in "Silent Night."
- School officials at New York's Unity Drive Elementary School censored students' work. According to the American Center for Law and Justice, the students in one class were given materials and the homework assignment

of decorating a Christmas ornament to be displayed at school. When one young boy made an ornament depicting a cross and the words, "The Reason for the Season: Jesus," his work was not displayed along with the others. Instead, it was deemed too religious and the boy was instructed to create a new, secular ornament.

- Administrators at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York renamed the staff Christmas party a holiday party, and then renamed it once again a year-end party.
- The principal of an elementary school in Delray Beach, Florida had a need to show how inclusive she was. That's why she had no Christmas tree, nativity scene or menorah in her office. Instead, her office was adorned with teddy bears wearing sweaters. Moreover, only "winter parties" and "winter celebrations" were tolerated. "We're very careful about this," she said.
- Michigan's Howell Public School District limited the number of religious songs that can be performed at school concerts. According to a 10-year-old policy, at least 70 percent of the music must be secular. As one choir director, frustrated at his limited selection, said, "I just find the whole thing disturbing that we're not able to do all the literature I'd like to do."
- At Brandeis Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky a teacher asked her students to make a Christmas tree out of paper; it was put on her bulletin board. But when a Jewish teacher said she was offended, she complained to the principal, Shervita West-Jordan, and got her wish. According to a news report, "She, and the teacher who complained, were bothered by the fact that the tree was made up of hands which represented all the students in the class. "Both the teacher and the principal were angry over the words, "Santa's Helpers," that were

placed over the tree. "Of course, the children in her classroom that were Indian and Muslim probably did not believe in Santa Claus," Jordan said. They were not "Santa's Helpers," she insisted. She said the tree could stay but the words had to go. She suggested "Holiday Helpers" or "Winter Helpers," because that would "make it a little more inclusive." Instead of instructing the teacher on her need to practice tolerance, the principal rewarded her for her intolerance.

- At Missouri State University, the Office of Multicultural Student Services did not list Christmas as part of its December celebrations: but it did list Kwanzaa, which they unfortunately thought was spelled Kwanza. They celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month from mid-September to mid-October; October is Gay and Lesbian Month; and Native American Heritage Month captures November.
- At SUNY Buffalo, they held a Holiday Carnival, which included "a Hanukkah table, Kwanzaa, Boxing Day [this is a Canadian holiday], St. Nick's Day and Kings Day." There were also red and green cookies for the nostalgic, and chicken was served at the Kwanzaa table.
- At Delaware College of Art and Design, they believed in diversity so much that "to help set the holiday mood," says Lynda Schmid, director of admissions, "students make multisided solids based out of various materials, including paper and copper."
- Penn State was clearly the most sensitive campus during the Christmas season. Patreese Ingram had a title that was just perfect for censoring Christmas: she is an Associate Professor of Diversity Education. She cautioned that we need to be careful when planning a holiday party. For example, "Try to avoid dates that may conflict with important dates in other cultures and

religions.” Also, “Try to keep decorations neutral, with symbols—flowers, balloons, candles and snowflakes—that can be enjoyed by most people.” Best of all was her advice about eating and drinking: Remember, she said, “pork is forbidden for Jewish and Muslim people. Shellfish is prohibited for Jewish people and beef is not eaten by Hindus. While coffee, tea and caffeinated soda may seem ‘safe,’ members of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) and Seventh-Day Adventists are prohibited from consuming caffeine. Therefore, juice may be an acceptable choice.”

- New York State’s Yorktown Central School District Board of Education refused a couple’s generous offer to donate a crèche to each of its public schools. Though the lobbies of the schools were decorated annually with menorahs and Kwanzaa decorations, only a Christmas tree was permitted to represent this major Christian holiday.
- Educators at Windmill Point Elementary in Port St. Lucie, Florida nixed a pageant called “A Penguin Christmas.” Administrators at the school decreed that no mention of “Christmas” was permitted as part of any holiday celebrations. As one frustrated mother asked, “My child learns about Kwanzaa and dreidels... Why can’t they sing about Santa and Rudolph?”
- New Jersey’s K-8 Howell School District and Board of Education refused to allow nativity scenes among the schools’ holiday displays, despite the requests of parents.

### **Equal Opportunity Offenders:**

*It is not just Christmas displays and celebrations that are stifled. Often, curmudgeons are opposed to public displays of any faith.*

- The Nyack Library in Nyack, New York turned down an

Orangetown resident's offer of a crèche to accompany two menorahs in the library. At the same meeting in which the man's offer was declined, library officials also passed a resolution to prohibit all holiday religious symbols.

- Government leaders in Olean, New York refused to allow religious displays in the town's park. In 1995, the common council voted to ban all such decoration.
- Officials in Fort Collins, Colorado banned any religious symbols from the city's holiday displays. While the secular Christmas tree was permitted, a group requesting to erect a menorah was denied. (The group was permitted to hold a lighting ceremony on city property before moving it to be housed in a local pub.) One city councilman explained why there was a ban on religious symbols: "we are just not trying to have the city in the middle of what can and cannot be displayed."
- City Council members in Willis Park, Georgia denied a couple's proposal to erect a nativity scene in the park. A majority of the council members decided they did not want religious displays installed on the public property.
- Officials in Southfield, Michigan removed a menorah from the city's holiday display after requests were made to include a crèche as well. Rather than allow diverse religious symbols to be erected, city leaders preferred to display secular symbols such as toy soldiers and deer.

#### **Government Bodies:**

- City officials in Safety Harbor, Florida removed a nativity scene from City Hall grounds after receiving a complaint about it, but permitted a neighboring menorah to stay put.

- Officials in Washington State's Department of General Administration permitted a menorah to be displayed in the Capitol Building, but not a crèche. According to the Associated Press, "officials were concerned that in comparison with a tree or menorah, a Nativity scene might carry a stronger impression of government endorsement of religion."
- The U.S. Department of State restricted the content of the "seasonal cards" sent by ambassadors. While the ambassadors were permitted to use government funds to purchase and mail the cards, they were not allowed to send out anything of a religious nature. According to the state department's memo on the issue, "any messages or images on the cards should be secular in nature (such as 'season's greetings' or pictures of wreaths, wintry scenes, snowmen or Santa Claus) and should not convey religious themes or messages."
- In Briarcliff Manor, New York, village officials put up a Christmas tree and a menorah, but balked at a request by an 80-year-old man to add a crèche (paid for by him). So he sued. In federal court, a judge ruled in his favor. Instead of adding the nativity scene to the display, officials in the Westchester town took everything down. "The Village erected a Menorah and a Christmas tree display in a spirit of inclusion," officials said. They did nothing of the sort: they gave Jews a religious symbol and Christians a secular one, and when they were told to treat both groups equally they instead elected to demonstrate intolerance towards both. That's their idea of neutrality—censor everyone equally.
- A city employee in Riverside, California was afraid of "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" being deemed offensive. While Olympic figure skater Sasha Cohen was skating at a local rink, a high-school choir started singing the

Christmas classic, immediately sending a city employee into orbit. The employee summoned a cop and got him to institute a gag rule: he ordered the choir to stop singing. Baldwin maintained that because Cohen is Jewish, she would be upset by the carol. But the city employee never bothered to ask the skater if she objected. As it turns out, Cohen couldn't have cared less. As usual, those who say we must be careful not to offend non-Christians at Christmastime are the ones who object to Christmas—not those whom they falsely claim to represent.

- Bureaucrats at an airport in Seattle removed Christmas trees from a terminal, after the trees had been erected each Christmas for the last 25 years. When a local rabbi threatened a lawsuit if the airport did not erect a menorah as well, airport authorities opted to get rid of the trees. After much public outcry, the rabbi agreed not to file a lawsuit, and the airport restored the trees.
- Officials in Hernando County, Florida were too afraid to call the decorated evergreen on the portico of the courthouse a Christmas tree. Instead, they insisted it was a holiday tree. One woman decorating the tree with red, white and blue ribbons explained, "It's not a Christmas tree... It shouldn't offend anybody."
- A town manager in Holden, Massachusetts stated that he would approve a menorah for display on town property (provided safety and other requirements were met), but not a crèche. According to the town manager, the menorah is "secular enough" to be permitted, but a nativity scene is not.
- Officials in Bay Harbor Islands, Florida removed Hanukkah decorations from the town's lampposts rather than add Christmas decorations to the mix. According to

Christian Newswire, a Christian activist named Sondra Snowdon went to court in order to erect a nativity scene outside of the town square (a menorah was already on display) and add the Christmas symbols to the lampposts. Though a judge ruled in her favor, lamppost decorations were removed entirely and Snowdon paid for the crèche herself, while taxpayer dollars were used to maintain the menorah. In addition, Snowdon maintained that the town passed an ordinance stating that she would be arrested if she were to hold any ceremony (such as a blessing or prayer service) by the crèche. However, for the past five years a rabbi was permitted to hold a small prayer service by the menorah.

- Organizers of the Hillsboro, New Hampshire “Old Fashioned Christmas” celebration cancelled a portion of the evening that was to take place at the local Valley Bible Chapel. The festivities were originally set to include a Christmas tree lighting ceremony, followed by tea at the church and a reading of “The Night Before Christmas.” However, when the chapel’s pastor asked to read the Christmas story from the Gospels as well, those in charge cancelled the tea altogether. As one member of the civic organization Hillsboro Pride (which co-sponsored the “Old Fashioned Christmas” with the Chamber of Commerce) explained, the people at the chapel “didn’t want to do it unless it had Jesus’ name in there... We didn’t want to get involved in any religious stuff, to keep it as neutral as we can for everyone.” A Chamber of Commerce member elaborated, “A lot of people celebrate Christmas but are not Christian... and a lot of Christians celebrate Christmas and don’t go near a church. We’re trying not to leave people out because of their specific religious leanings.”
- Commissioners in Tippecanoe County, Indiana barred nativity scenes from the courthouse lawn. Though

charities and organizations were permitted to erect displays, the commissioners decided in 1999 that they would determine what was acceptable for gracing the lawn and what wasn't. (Prior to 1999, nativity scenes were acceptable.) Ribbons calling attention to drug abuse and ceramic animals were both permitted, but crèches were verboten.

- City officials in St. Albans, West Virginia erected a manger scene minus the Holy Family and the Wise Men. Visitors to the St. Albans City Park were treated to the bizarre sight of a lit-up stable containing statues of sheep, camels and a star. Asked about the lack of the baby Jesus, the park's superintendent stated, "We try to explain that by law we can't do that. We have been advised by the [city] council not to get into that." He further reported that the city was trying to avoid controversy or any complaints from the ACLU. After being deluged with complaints, the mayor of St. Albans announced that a figure of the baby Jesus was added to the manger scene.
- Reynoldsburg, Ohio town officials removed the nativity scene from the town's annual Christmas light display. Though the manger, donated by the local Vineyard Community Church, was among the decorations for the last five years, complaints from naysayers led to the mayor deciding there would be no religious symbols at all, rather than open the door to people of other religions requesting that their symbols be erected as well. (One local man, a critic of the Nativity scene, had suggested that the Hindu symbol for good fortune, a right-facing swastika, should be permitted if a crèche is permitted.)
- City officials in Chicago dropped New Line Cinema's new film "The Nativity Story" as a sponsor of the Christkindlmarket Christmas festival and then sent mixed-messages about the reason behind this decision. The

city's executive director of special events originally advised the festival's organizers, the German American Chamber of Commerce, that allowing New Line to show scenes from the upcoming film would be "insensitive to the many people of different faiths" who attend the event (the name of which, in German, means "Christ child market"). City leaders then claimed that New Line's sponsorship was dropped because it would violate city guidelines calling for events to "refuse or reduce any blatant commercial message."

- The Berkley, Michigan City Council voted to remove a nativity scene that had stood in front of city hall for 65 years. The council acted after the ACLU threatened a lawsuit. There was a lot of blame to go around. First, there was the ACLU, an organization so terrified of religion that it has actually expressed anger over a nine-foot statue of Jesus that is located on the ocean floor off the coast of Key Largo. Second, there were the spineless residents and clergymen in the area who liked the idea of giving the nativity scene to the Berkley Clergy Association for display on church property (it was one of three options on the table); in doing so, they handed a victory to the ACLU. Third, there was the bogus argument made by the mayor, Marilyn Stephan, who said, "It's a risk to the safety of the crèche. We want Santa to come and do the Christmas tree lighting and for the safety of all who come, you can't have all that stuff around." The stuff—baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph—has been in the same spot for 65 years, without incident. Fourth, there was the concern, expressed by some city officials, that the cost of litigation might prove prohibitive: six organizations, including the Thomas More Law Center, agreed to accept the case pro bono (the only reasonable concern was that if the town lost, it would have to pay the ACLU's legal fees).

- Bureaucrats in Colorado government dictated what the University of Colorado's faculty may call its staff parties. State auditors decreed that state money was not to be used to celebrate religious holidays. However, according to the school's spokesman, "Departments can spend a little bit of money at the end of the semester for a staff appreciation party, but the motivation cannot be the holiday itself." In other words, if, say, the philosophy department wanted to dip into the petty cash to buy some eggnog and a cheese platter during December, that would be fine—so long as they refer to their gathering as the "Semester's End Social." But they better not dare call it a "Holiday Party," or worse still, a "Christmas Party."
- Officials of the city of Portland, Maine, were squeamish about the word "Christmas." The majestic blue-spruce tree decked with lights in the city square was called a "Holiday tree," not a "Christmas tree." A marketing director for the city explained the name: "We're trying to keep it neutral... We don't want to offend anybody. We are trying to celebrate the holidays, no matter what you believe."
- The Board of Selectmen of Wellesley, Massachusetts refused to include a crèche among its holiday decorations, although a menorah and a crescent were both on display. A local resident wished to donate a nativity scene to replace the Christmas tree there. The resident rightly reasoned that a religious symbol of Christmas, and not a secular one, should be permitted along with the religious symbols of other faiths. However, the Board of Selectman denied the resident's generous offer.

#### Private Groups/Companies:

- The Art Center of Corpus Christi, Texas featured an exhibit with the works of K-Space Arts Studio. One of the exhibits was a painting showing the womb of a nude

Virgin Mother, holding a crucifix linked by rosary beads to the unborn son's umbilical supply. Another painting looked like a black and white version of the Last Supper, but was actually a man who was eating dinner with rats. Another painting showed men dressed in different costumes, drinking from a keg of beer. One of the men was dressed as a priest from the Vatican.

- Management at the Orlando Cloisters in Florida banned all religious symbols, including angels and nativity scenes, from the public areas of the home for senior citizens. After the Liberty Counsel got involved and cited this as a case of discrimination in violation of the Federal Fair Housing Act, the Cloisters reversed its policy
- Executives at General Growth Properties, which operates over 200 malls in 44 states, refused to display nativity scenes, even when donated by an interested party called Operation Just Say Merry Christmas. The management of this Chicago company claimed they did not wish to decorate with religious symbols. However, menorahs were displayed in its shopping centers. This corporate policy discriminates against Christians by allowing a Jewish symbol representing a miracle, but telling Christians to make due with secular symbols.
- Supervisors at Commack, New York's Baumann & Sons Buses caved in to the complaints of one grumpy parent. When a school bus driver wore a Santa cap during his rounds in the Commack School District, he had to face his bosses at the end of the day. They told the driver that a parent complained to the district that his or her child doesn't believe in Santa Claus, and was offended by the hat. The driver informed other parents that he would likely lose his job for continuing to wear the hat. The school district's superintendent informed Baumann & Sons that the hat is not a religious object and should not be

banned. The driver was ultimately allowed to keep his job and continue wearing the hat.

- A performer called Jessica Delfino took her “Merry S–tmas Tour” on the road. Described as “rife with Christmas-themed debauchery,” Delfino performed on December 19 in New York City, appeared in Washington, D.C. on the 21st and traveled to South Durham, North Carolina on the 22nd. Her act included the showing of an obscenely-titled video banned from YouTube that features her rapping about her vagina, complete with obscene pictures flashing in the background. Rapping about her genitals, she sings, “it will become your true religion.”
- On December 9, New Jersey’s Courier-Post editorial board ran an editorial saying, “Putting religious symbols on government property violates the law and challenges the constitutional right of religious freedom.” The daily was twice wrong. As the Catholic League showed when we erected a crèche in New York City’s Central Park, it is not unconstitutional to put a religious symbol on public property. Furthermore, it doesn’t challenge religious freedom to display a manger scene or a menorah—it demonstrates it.
- On the December 11 episode of the CBS sitcom “Two and a Half Men,” one of the characters sang “Joy to the World,” changing the lyrics to make a bawdy song about his plans for his date that evening.
- Managers at Ocean County Mall in Toms River, New Jersey eschewed a nativity scene in favor of secular Christmas decorations, while at the same time allowing a menorah. When asked about this discrepancy, a director of marketing for the mall (a branch of Simon Malls) replied that, “We are particularly careful to try and create a festive atmosphere that celebrates the spirit of giving

and community, which dominates the holiday season, rather than focus on religious aspects.” The manager did not explain how a menorah is not a religious symbol while a crèche is.

- Brooklyn’s Shore Road Garden Council insisted on calling their Christmas tree a “holiday tree.” After the neighborhood’s state senator protested that it is absurd to call a Christmas tree by any other name, a council member attempted to justify the decision by claiming, “I’m aware of his opinion on this, but we’re trying to include all the religions because we’re trying to be inclusive.. It is a Christmas celebration that we’re having, but we’re trying to include everybody.”
- New York’s Staten Island Mall ended the practice of allowing an individual to erect a privately owned nativity scene outside of JCPenney each year. In response to complaints from those who did not like the crèche, the mall’s managers decided individual religious decorations would no longer be permitted. Instead, the mall has erected a “holiday fixture” to celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. *Staten Island Advance* reporter Judy Randall described the fixture as follows: “The thing, which is dusted with fake snow, might be best described as a 7-foot tri-cornered pole. It’s totally no-frills and so bland that the other afternoon, as I watched and waited for 20 minutes, not one shopper stopped to take a look at it, much less admire it.”
- Spencer Gifts sold obscene Christmas tree ornaments. The novelty store offered six different ornaments depicting images associated with Christmas, such as elves and reindeer, in sexually suggestive positions. To compound the problem, in a Spencer store in Jacksonville, Florida, the ornaments were displayed on the shelves in plain view of children and any shopper passing by.

- Avanti Press, a greeting card company, offered a card with a photograph of a nativity scene in which the traditional crèche figures are replaced by canines.
- Pittsburgh's Washington Square Unit Owners Association banned all "holiday decorations which are identified with a particular religious faith." The ban came after a resident and the Catholic League wrote to the board requesting that a crèche be permitted in the complex's common areas (a menorah was displayed each year). Rather than extend equal rights to the Christian tenants, the board decided only to allow completely generic displays. Menorahs and nativity scenes were out; snowmen and frosted windows were in.
- Event organizers at New York City's Lincoln Center were afraid to call a Christmas tree by its proper name. Though the plaza at Lincoln Center played host to a November 27 event that included a gospel chorale, a selection from "The Nutcracker," and a bedazzled tree, no mention was made of Christmas. Rather, visitors were offered a "holiday tree" and "Winter's Eve" celebration.
- A mail-order company, Collections Etc. offered a "Cat Nativity" set for sale in its "Holiday Favorites 2006" catalog. The "Cat Nativity" replaced the traditional crèche figures of the Holy Family, the shepherds, an angel and the Wise Men with felines.
- A headline writer at the Associated Press got cold feet. An article about Christmas tree farmers donating trees to the families of soldiers was originally titled "Growers donate Christmas trees for troops in combat zones and their families stateside" at 9:43 am on November 14. At 10:02 am the same article was sent out again on the wires. However the headline read, "Growers Donate Holiday Trees to Troops."
- Best Buy omitted any mention of Christmas from its

advertising. The electronics retailer apparently thought that celebrating a major Christian holiday would be insulting to non-Christians. A spokesperson reported, "We'll continue to stick with 'happy holidays...' The fact of the matter is, there are several holidays throughout November and December. We want to be respectful of that."

- North Carolina's Northlake and Caroline Place malls avoided references to Christmas. Both malls preferred the greetings "happy holidays" and "seasons greetings."

### **Vandalism:**

Vandals and thieves struck nativity scenes in the following cities and towns during the Christmas season:

Tucson, AZ; Concord, CA; Millbrae, CA; Mission Viejo, CA; San Francisco, CA; Moorpark, CA; Vista, CA; Naugatuck, CT; Southington, CT; Stratford, CT; Waterbury, CT; Beverly Hills, FL; Fort Walton Beach, FL; Wellington, FL; Ammon, ID; Weiser, ID; Chicago, IL; Edwardsville, IL; Jackson County, IL; Tinley Park, IL; Floyd County, IN; Fort Wayne, IN; Montgomery County, IN; Portage, IN; Des Moines, IA; Newell, IA; Sioux City, IA; Wichita, KS; Hardin, KY; Lafayette, LA; Youngsville, LA; Portland, ME; Unity, ME; Winthrop, ME; Calvert County, MD; Towson, MD; Brookline, MA; Fitchburg, MA; Hopkinton, MA; Norwell, MA; Southborough, MA; Three Rivers, MA; Gladwin, MI; Milford, MI; Portage Township, MI; Hastings, MN; Neosho, MO; Columbus, NE; Plaistow, NH; Galloway Township, NJ; Hopewell Junction, NY; Rockland County, NY; Fayetteville, NC; New Bern, NC; Raleigh, NC; Dover, OH; Utica, OH; Artemis, PA; Belle Vernon, PA; Bucks County, PA; Greenfield, PA; Monessen, PA; Hilton Head, SC; Sioux Falls, SD; Grand Prairie, TX; Halom City, TX; Houston, TX; Santa Fe, TX; Salt Lake City, UT; Fairfax County, VA; Blue Lake, WA; Seattle, WA; Whidbey Island, WA; Winfield, WV; West Allis, WI; Stevens Point, WI.

Although all of these acts were inexcusable, some stood out among the crowd:

- The nativity scene at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church in Stratford, Connecticut was vandalized twice. First someone stole the baby Jesus statue. More than a week later, it was discovered that an angel's wing from the nativity scene had been broken. On Christmas Day, vandals smashed to bits a crèche in front of the local Knights of Columbus Hall. Nativity scenes at two other churches in Stratford were later victimized. Thieves then stole the baby Jesus at St. James Catholic Church and smashed other figures, and also smashed figures at Christ Episcopal Church.
- Serial thieves in the Clearing Garfield Ridge neighborhood of Chicago went on a spree during which they stole 32 statues of baby Jesus. The figures were eventually dumped on the lawn of St. Symphorosa Catholic Church.
- An employee at the Wichita, Kansas clinic of late-term abortionist Dr. George Tiller moved a nativity scene from public property to the clinic's property. According to LifeSiteNews.com, after a member of Operation Rescue placed the crèche on a public strip of land outside of the clinic, the employee deemed the nativity scene "offensive," picked it up and moved it behind a fence on the clinic's property, where it would no longer be visible. A police officer retrieved the crèche.
- Thieves in Lafayette, Louisiana stole the baby Jesus from the front yard of a private residence. After a man donated a new figure, that was also stolen. To make matters worse, the man who donated the baby Jesus figure was later victimized; his Jesus figure was also stolen.
- A hooligan in Plaistow, New Hampshire swiped the baby Jesus from a homeowner's manger scene and replaced it

with an empty beer can. The vandal later returned the statue, but had drawn devil horns on Jesus' head.

- A group of hoodlums in Rockland County, New York, calling themselves "the Opiates," victimized nativity scenes. The group struck twice in Suffern and four times in Haverstraw in December, each time stealing statues of the baby Jesus. They also committed similar acts in 2005. Three former high school students were later arrested for the thefts and charged with 14 counts of petty larceny.
- Four college students were charged in connection with the theft of nativity scene figures from Newness of Life Ministry Church in Monessen, Pennsylvania. The pastor of the church discovered the figures were missing. One statue that remained was a defaced Virgin Mary. The statue's eyes and mouth had been blackened and an obscenity was scribbled on its forehead.