

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

Michael P. McDonald, Director of Communications

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2024 will go down in American history as a pivotal year. The people standing for tradition, reason, and faith fought to reclaim their country, and the Catholic League was right there in the thick of it.

By far, the biggest story of 2024 was the presidential election, and as history unfolded, we tirelessly worked to educate Catholics on the critical issues at stake.

To this end, we published a report on the religious liberty policies of Donald Trump and the Biden-Harris administration. We noted how Trump was pro-religious liberty and never supported groups hostile to Catholics. We could not say the same for Biden-Harris and found their record sorely lacking. Our comprehensive report did more to educate Catholics on this subject than any other document put out by other organizations.

We additionally pointed out Harris' outright hostility to Catholics on several occasions. She stiffed Catholics this year by refusing to go to the Al Smith Dinner. While serving in the Senate, she was openly hostile to judicial nominees who were faithful Catholics. As California Attorney General, she crippled pregnancy resource centers and targeted pro-life activists.

While Harris had problems with Catholics that upheld the teachings of the Church, in her corner was a whole slew of

Catholic dissidents. We called out these rogues.

Ultimately, Trump decisively won the election, in large part thanks to him carrying approximately 58 percent of Catholics. Moving forward, the work will turn toward ensuring that the safeguards for religious liberty are as robust as they can be. To that end, Bill Donohue urged Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito to resign early in the new Trump administration so they can be replaced by younger justices who will protect the court's religion friendly majority for years to come. Bill also raised concerns over Robert F. Kennedy's departures from Catholic teachings and the prudence of appointing him as Secretary for Health and Human Services.

While Trump's victory represents a return to tradition and commonsense, the opposition went down swinging. In 2024, we saw a concentrated effort from the federal and state governments targeting Catholics and other people of faith.

We called out the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network after the Federal agency flagged "the purchasing of books (including religious texts)" as a sign of extremism. We also went after the Department of Justice (DOJ) for using the FACE Act to punish peaceful pro-life activists while giving a pass to violent pro-abortion radicals.

The FBI continued to stall in revealing the truth behind its probe of Catholics from 2023. Even after DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz released a report on the matter, several critical questions remained. For now, it appears that our doggedness to uncover the whole truth has at least curtailed the worst of it. Hopefully, the new administration can definitively put this issue to rest.

Another area we battled with the FBI was the release of Audrey Hale's manifesto. In 2023, Hale, a woman who falsely believed she was a man, attacked the Christian Covenant School in

Nashville, killing six people including three children. For over a year, the FBI withheld the manifesto from the public. Normally, such documents are released right away. We hounded them to disseminate the manifesto.

When it was finally released, it was clear why the FBI kept it hidden for so long. The manifesto showed that Hale was a very sick person, and her woes were further compounded by identifying as transgender.

We also pushed back on the Department of Homeland Security after it came to light that an internal advisory board recommended flagging those who served in the military, are religious, and support Trump as potential extremists and domestic terrorists.

We proved Biden's White House and the media were wrong to insist the ban on religious symbols at the annual "egg roll" party was in line with previous administrations. We found evidence to the contrary highlighting their deception.

Another disturbing trend was how the Biden administration used Orwellian language to influence public thought and sideline traditional Catholic values. We issued a report examining this.

On the state level, perhaps the greatest display of anti-Catholicism came from Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer. While wearing a "Harris Walz" hat, Whitmer mocked the Eucharist by placing a Dorito on the tongue of a kneeling Liz Plank, a podcaster. We led the charge against Whitmer, alerting all Catholic parishes in Michigan of her horrendous act. We created such a media firestorm that she was compelled to put out a statement.

In the statement, Whitmer tried to say she was not mocking the Eucharist. Instead, she was championing the CHIP Act also insisting that no one was kneeling. Of course, this was a flimsy excuse and photographic evidence quickly proved she was

lying. We did not fall for it and jumped back into the fray to confront her dishonesty.

We also called out a dangerous ballot initiative in New York that would trample parental rights and religious liberty. We mobilized Catholics across the state to vote no on Proposition 1. Bill wrote an excellent booklet highlighting the adverse impact the initiative would have, and we sent the booklet to important stakeholders in the Empire State. Unfortunately, New York is too far gone, and Proposition 1 passed.

Joining the government in targeting Catholics came a large swath of characters from all walks of life.

Twice in 2024, anti-Catholic activists defiled St. Patrick's Cathedral. In the first instance, LGBT radicals hijacked the cathedral to stage a funeral mocking Catholic traditions for a man who falsely claimed to be a woman. Then again, during the Easter Vigil Mass, protesters invaded the cathedral screaming "Free Palestine" and holding a banner that read "SILENCE = DEATH." In both instances, we called out the crashers and the media, which either ignored the story or tried to frame the radicals as the victims.

After Harrison Butker, the kicker for the Kansas City Chiefs, spoke in defense of traditional Catholic values at Benedictine College, he was criticized by the NFL and slammed on social media. We happily came to Butker's defense with greater effect than any other Catholic organization.

The Olympics' opening ceremony featured a skit mocking the Last Supper starring transgenders. We wasted no time in contacting International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach and other officials around the world, targeting the Olympics' sponsors, and calling out those telling us it was not intended as an insult to Catholics.

Additionally, we called out the NBA for its selective interest in "human rights." While the league claims to promote social

justice in America, it partners with China, one of the worst persecutors of Christians.

We also confronted the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF) after they tried to intimidate us. The atheists complained to the IRS that we “engaged in unlawful political campaigning.” We were undeterred, because we did nothing wrong, and promised to continue to publicly hammer anti-Catholic bigots.

Meanwhile, a coordinated effort by Christian bashers attempted to discredit Trump nominees Pete Hegseth and Mike Huckabee. We exposed the bigots targeting these men for their faith.

All of these attacks were not just acts of random bigotry. The secular left needs to weaken the power of the Church and the resolve of individual Catholics to advance their agenda, particularly on the issues of abortion and transgenderism.

In 2024, the media covered for the pro-abortion extremists in the Democratic Party. Repeatedly, we were told there was no such thing as late-term abortions by the “fact checkers” and the talking heads.

Even during the presidential debate between Trump and Harris, and again during the vice presidential debate between JD Vance and Tim Walz, who as governor of Minnesota signed a law which repealed protections for infants born alive following a botched abortion, the pundits lied saying that late term abortions are “misinformation” and babies born alive receive lifesaving care following an abortion.

The worst was the *New York Times*, which omitted the relevant portion of the sentence that proved Walz repealed safeguards for newborn babies.

We routinely pointed out the truth to correct these false narratives.

There was also a lot of action on transgenderism. The

secularists went on a tear trying to advance this cause. Across the country parents and religious people saw their rights eroded so that men and women can pretend to be the opposite sex. In several instances, parents lost custody of their children or children were permitted to “transition” without parental consent. Additionally, faithful Catholics and Christians were denied the opportunity to provide loving homes to children in need.

Fortunately, we may have reached a tipping point on this issue. Across Europe, many nations have pulled back on their support for transgenderism. Closer to home polls throughout the year showed people rejecting this anti-scientific ideology.

We struck while the iron was hot with an ad blitz at both the Republican and Democratic conventions calling on both parties to commit to protecting children from this insanity. We also showed our support for those who realized they were hoodwinked by transgenderism and have decided to “detransition.” Look for more of these people in the year to come.

We also fought back on several other key issues and scored critical victories in the process.

We exposed the myth of “Christian nationalist” violence comprehensively showing that the “violence” often cited has almost nothing to do with Christianity. It is just a fraudulent attempt to silence Catholics.

We set the record straight after the *Washington Post* published a report on abuse at Catholic-run Indian boarding schools in the United States. We thoroughly tore apart the erroneous conclusions.

When the media was totally silent about a report by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops noting the almost complete eradication of clergy sexual abuse, we highlighted this good news.

Bill also released his new book *Cultural Meltdown: The Secular Roots of Our Moral Crisis*, and our documentary “Walt’s Disenchanted Kingdom” won its ninth award.

We continued displaying our life-sized nativity scene in Central Park. Additionally, we arranged for a billboard this year in Madison, Wisconsin, home to FFRF. Our ad took aim at them for their mockery of Christmas with their Winter Solstice exhibit. We also defended a Catholic League member who wanted to display a Nativity alongside a menorah but was denied. The building decided to do the equal but intolerant thing and removed all displays. Meanwhile, around the country, atheist and satanic groups tried to dilute Christmas, but we pushed back.

We achieved great things this year, but it is only the beginning. It will take time to utterly route the secularists that maligned and marginalized Catholics in the last few years. The cultural forces that engendered these attacks remain potent and will attempt to corrode our values in the future. The culture war cannot be won in a single election cycle. It takes years of dedicated effort. The forecast for 2025 looks brighter. However, there is still work to be done, and the Catholic League will be there to see it through.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

**Catholic League For Religious And Civil Rights
2023 Year in Review**

Michael P. McDonald, Director of Communications

For 50 years the Catholic League has led the charge in every major cultural battle, and in 2023, we continued this tradition.

We started the year off with a bang when we released our documentary, "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom: How Disney is Losing its Way." The film explores how the once family-friendly media titan devolved into a woke behemoth promoting the most radical elements of the LGBT agenda.

The movie was made available on several different platforms. We reached an enormous audience and generated multiple friendly radio and TV interviews.

Further, "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom" won critical acclaim earning recognitions at major film festivals. At the L.A. International Short Film Festival, we won four prestigious awards. Additionally, our movie was nominated for honors at The Prisma Film Festival in Rome, Italy; The Perth Christian Film Festival in Australia; and The Arizona Faith and Family Film Festival.

The biggest sign of our success was the troubles that plagued Disney. We had no illusions about taking down Disney. We wanted to educate the public and inspire Disney to reconsider its woke programming. Nevertheless, Disney had a rough year, and "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom" helped contribute to their woes.

We followed up this success with a major fight with the L.A. Dodgers. In mid-May, the Dodgers announced they intended to honor the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a group of virulent anti-Catholic men who dress up as nuns, at the team's Pride Night.

We sent a letter to the head of Major League Baseball (MLB) about this outrage, and on the following day, the Dodgers

disinvited the “Sisters.” But then gay and trans activists, along with local government officials, besieged the Dodgers. Soon after, the Dodgers reinvited the “Sisters,” offering them an apology, thus endorsing anti-Catholic bigotry.

We anticipated that the “Sisters” could be reinvited, and Bill Donohue personally prepared a report documenting their bigotry. We called on Catholics in the Los Angeles area to boycott the game to send a message to the Dodgers, and MLB, that anti-Catholicism cannot be tolerated.

We sent Bill’s report to over 300 parishes in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, asking pastors to support the boycott. In the following weeks, we contacted other important Catholic stakeholders in the area. We expanded our reach by including prominent individuals of other religions and Latino business owners. In every case, we sent the report and our plea to boycott Pride Night.

We also hit the public airwaves. For the two weeks before the game, we ran scores of ads promoting our boycott. Our media blitz on KABC radio caught the eye of the *Los Angeles Times*. Moreover, we gave multiple TV, radio, newspaper, and internet interviews on the controversy.

Almost no one showed up for the ceremony honoring the “Sisters,” and we drove down the game’s attendance by 3,500.

On the heels of this win, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the First Amendment rights of a Colorado woman, Lorie Smith, must be respected when it comes to forcing her to express beliefs that are contrary to her conscience. This was a great victory for free speech and freedom of religion. We submitted an amicus brief in this case, *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*. We are delighted with this outcome and to have played a role in it.

In 2023, the most serious threat to religious liberty came from the Department of Justice (DOJ). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) set its sights on Catholics.

We first learned of the anti-Catholic FBI caper when a whistleblower disclosed a memo from the Richmond Field Office investigating "Radical-Traditional Catholics." The memo drew heavily on anti-Catholic sources, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center. We weren't convinced this was a limited probe and publicly asked if orthodox Catholics were next.

We were right. It soon came to light that the FBI had looked into "mainline Catholic parishes" and "local diocesan leadership." We wrote to FBI Director Christopher Wray asking him to release those documents related to the memo. He didn't reply, but we didn't give up.

The House Judiciary Committee was also looking into the FBI for this. Although the Committee had some documents from the FBI, they were heavily redacted. When Wray testified before the Committee in July, he told Chairman Jim Jordan that the probe was contained to the Richmond Field Office and agreed to send less redacted documents.

Unsatisfied with Wray's response, we wrote to Jordan asking him to find out why ordinary Catholics were being investigated. The following day, the FBI finally gave the Committee less redacted documents, and we learned that it was not "a single field office." Rather, the memo grew out of work from several offices.

We wrote Jordan several more times proposing a series of questions that Wray needed to answer, and the Committee was very receptive.

The Committee produced a report in December revealing the FBI violated important procedures and safeguards. Further, the report exposed the FBI had no interest in dissident, left-wing Catholics. They had their sights on Catholics who are "pro-life, pro-family, and support the biological basis for sex and gender distinction as potential domestic terrorists."

We thanked Jordan and offered our support in the fights to

come. In total, we wrote 11 letters to hold the FBI and DOJ accountable. We will keep at it as long as necessary. Ultimately, it will only end once the anti-Catholic element is purged from the FBI.

Unfortunately, this trend is not limited to the DOJ and FBI. Across the Western world, people of faith, mostly Christians, are being harassed and arrested by government agents at an alarming rate. The most common reason why they are bullied is their biblical objection to the LGBT agenda and opposition to abortion. Their rights are being trounced.

No one received a greater public flogging than House Speaker Mike Johnson. The all-out assault on him is meant to discourage younger Christian conservatives from running for office and to discredit the Founders and our Judeo-Christian heritage. We warned Catholics that the same people behind these vicious assaults against Speaker Johnson hate the religious principles upon which America was founded and those who cherish them.

Some lambasting Catholics were exposed as frauds in 2023. For years, we heard from activists that the residential schools in Canada, some of which were run by Catholics, amounted to genocide against indigenous people. This reached a fevered pitch last year when it was alleged that mass graves had been discovered. In 2023, when these grave sites were excavated, no bodies were found. We issued a report showing this was a hoax.

This year the Biden administration announced a new rule requiring foster parents to affirm LGBT children. This gives all the power to kids and tramples the religious liberty rights of parents.

This rule implies that foster children would do better in the affirming care of transgender parents. We examined this claim and found that the transgender community is predisposed to violence. Particularly when it comes to “intimate partner

violence," transgenders are more prone to this than any other demographic. We compiled a report highlighting this.

Transgender violence is not just limited to themselves. This year, we witnessed a wave of trans domestic terrorism. We documented these attacks in a report. The biggest of these was the shooting at Covenant Christian School in Nashville. A woman pretending to be a man targeted the school and killed six people, including three children. Although police recovered a manifesto indicating the shooter's motive, the authorities continue to keep its contents a secret.

Another critical front in the culture war was education. We prepared a report on the many ways in which public schools are deliberately sexualizing children.

The endemic radicalism in education stems from years of Christian bashing on campus. We documented how "Christian Privilege" classes, workshops, and lectures have been in vogue at universities across the country.

This now permeates into the lower grades. We contacted over 80 public officials in Washington State after a teacher called parents concerned about the sexual indoctrination "Christofascists." Even more troubling, Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, lambasted parents who support school choice claiming they had a "particular Christian ideology to dominate the country." We called on her to resign.

The Biden administration rescinded a rule created by Trump that protected the religious rights of students on campus. We issued a report on how prior to Trump's rule religious students regularly had their rights eroded.

In 2023, a report by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops confirmed that the clergy sexual abuse scandal ended long ago and is now practically non-existent. The number of credible allegations against the clergy consistently fell

between 2004 and 2022. This is good news, and we will keep flagging this.

During the “Synod on Synodality” we issued a report highlighting the successes of Catholic communities that adhere to orthodoxy and decline of those that embrace heterodoxy. Additionally, we kept tabs on the dissidents, who tried to hijack the proceedings.

On October 7, Hamas launched the deadly attack on Israel. The radicals in this country rallied in support of the Islamic terrorist group. We noted that Israel had met the requirements for a “just war,” as defined by the Church and called out the radicals for celebrating the attack and promulgating anti-Semitism.

We continued displaying our life-sized nativity scene in Central Park. Building on this tradition, this year we also had a huge digital billboard celebrating Christmas in Times Square. It was shown four to six times an hour for the two weeks before Christmas. We played off the theme of “diversity” turning it back on the people that use it as a cudgel to marginalize Catholics.

After the atheists at the Freedom From Religion Foundation forced a small town in Iowa to take down a crèche on public property, government officials added some secular symbols and the nativity scene was restored. We begged the atheists to sue us for displaying our own crèche in Central Park, and the bullies refused to do so.

2023 was a milestone year for the Catholic League, marking our 50th anniversary. First founded in 1973 by Fr. Virgil Blum, the league has grown into the largest Catholic civil rights group and remains one of the last grass-roots advocacy organizations in the country.

We celebrated this occasion on April 27, at the New York Athletic Club. Many prominent clergy and lay people were in

attendance. Raymond Arroyo served as the Master of Ceremonies, and Walter Knysz, Cardinal Dolan and Bill Donohue gave remarks. It was a great evening.

Bill also released his book *War on Virtue: How the Ruling Class is Killing the American Dream* and marked his 30th year as president and CEO of the Catholic League.

This year perfectly encapsulated our last 50 years. We had major accomplishments and scored critical victories. What the next 50 years will bring is anyone's guess. But with dedicated supporters, the Catholic League will surely keep winning in the years ahead.

Michael P. McDonald is Director of Communications at the Catholic League.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

Catholic League For Religious And Civil Rights 2022 Year in Review

Michael P. McDonald, Director of Communications

The forces working to undermine the Catholic Church and our Judeo-Christian values doubled-down in 2022. One might expect a traditional-minded organization to focus on mitigating losses; however, the Catholic League went on the offense undertaking many bold projects and played a significant part in the major culture war victories of the last year.

The biggest of these projects was the making of our documentary "Walt's Disenchanted Kingdom: How Disney is Losing its Way." It has a star-studded cast, and Jason Meath, the film's director, did a magnificent job. We anticipate it will garner a wide audience when it is released in January 2023.

Another major undertaking was a survey of Catholics for the 60th anniversary of Vatican II. We did this to counter the narrative that Catholics were largely dissatisfied with the Church and wanted to see changes. To this end, we contracted McLaughlin & Associates to conduct the poll. They did great work, and the results will greatly help us set the record straight for years to come.

We also filed an amicus brief in *303 Creative LLC v Elenis*. This case involves a Christian web designer, Lori Smith, who launched a preemptive strike against the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act: it would require her to build wedding websites for "gay marriages." Represented by the Pittsburgh law firm of Gallagher Giancola, we support Lori Smith in her quest to maintain her First Amendment rights. The Supreme Court will rule on this in 2023.

While we undertook these bold projects, there were several key victories before the high court. One case involved the religious rights of a football coach, who lost his job because he prayed on the field following games. The other involved the state of Maine discriminating against religious schools.

While both of these victories are important, the most critical decision from the Supreme Court in 2022 was the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*. After nearly 50 years of determined efforts by Catholics across the country, Justice Samuel Alito, writing for the 5-4 majority in *Dobbs v. Jackson*, held that "Roe was egregiously wrong from the start. Its reasoning was exceptionally weak, and the decision has had damaging consequences." That is why, he said, "It is time to heed the Constitution and return the issue of abortion to the people's

elected representatives.”

Many organizations, particularly the Catholic Church, kept the fight for life going over the years, and in doing so, they contributed to this victory. We, too, played an active role in keeping this issue in front of the public through scores media appearances.

Even before the ruling came out, the pro-abortion fanatics desecrated two of the most prominent Catholic churches in the nation. On January 20, during the Vigil for Life at the National Basilica in D.C., Catholics for Choice used a light projector to broadcast their anti-Catholic message.

Two days later, another anti-Catholic outfit, New York City for Abortion Rights, projected “God Loves Abortion” and other vile slogans on the exterior of St. Patrick’s Cathedral. Supporters of the group shouted obscenities at pro-life Catholics entering and exiting the Cathedral.

Then in May, when a draft decision was leaked suggesting the Supreme Court was prepared to overturn *Roe*, the pro-abortion fanatics began to increase their violence. When the court ultimately ruled in June, things reached a fever pitch.

We put together a representative list of the incidents of violence against Catholics so we could call for action from the proper authorities.

To this end, we sent a letter to Attorney General Merrick Garland asking him to investigate Jane’s Revenge, a radical pro-abortion group that uses domestic terrorists’ tactics. Rather than take action against physical violence perpetrated against Catholics, the leadership of the overtly politicized Department of Justice (DOJ) chose to target pro-life activists instead.

On September 23, a Catholic pro-life activist, Mark Houck, was arrested by two dozen FBI agents—they came into his house with

guns drawn—for allegedly violating the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

This kind of overreaction for a minor infraction of the law is deeply troubling, and it becomes even more troubling when paired with the DOJ's under-reaction to attacks on the pro-life side.

We wrote to the FBI and DOJ about this, but when they did not get back to us, we contacted several congressional leaders calling on them to hold the FBI and DOJ to accountable.

While it is troubling enough for Federal law enforcement to target Catholics, equally disturbing was the silence of prominent Catholics in Washington when pro-abortion radicals attacked Catholics. Both President Joe Biden and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, "devout Catholics," remained mute on these instances of violence.

For his part, Biden has grown more radical over the years in his support for abortion. This is evident in the people he has working around him. Six of the eight Catholics in his cabinet have long track records of championing abortion. Another prominent figure in Biden's White House is John Podesta, who previously tried to orchestrate a "Catholic Spring" to encourage Catholics to revolt against Church teachings.

In the aftermath of the *Dobbs* decision, even the corporations decided to join the radicals on the abortion issue. We made a tally of the companies that announced they would pay for abortions in their healthcare plans, thus short-circuiting states with laws protecting the unborn.

In addition to abortion, transgenderism—the dangerous idea that the sexes are interchangeable—was another major flashpoint in the culture war in 2022.

While it is bad enough that the Biden administration is promoting this fantasy, it took steps to thwart efforts by the

states to protect children and promote the truth. Fortunately, several governors, particularly FL Gov. Ron DeSantis, pushed back against Biden's tyrannical tactics.

But Biden's most dangerous proposal was the effort to amend Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (a.k.a. ObamaCare) to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex to include "sexual orientation and gender identity." This would utterly shatter the religious liberty protections of Catholic hospitals and force them to provide transgender services. Beyond infringing on the First Amendment rights of Catholics, it would threaten the well-being of children.

During the public comment period, we asked Catholic League members to register their complaints by strongly emphasizing this threat to religious liberty. While this might not have been enough to totally deter Biden from his objective, it sent a strong message to Washington.

While the Biden Administration was promoting transgenderism and actively undermining religious liberty, the courts were pushing back. Two appellate courts ruled that other Biden initiatives could not force Catholic hospitals and doctors to perform transgender procedures.

Additionally, corporations joined in promoting transgenderism in the past year. Twitter was one of the worst offenders. This prompted us to send a letter to Twitter after the company began sanctioning people for complaining about a male University of Pennsylvania swimmer competing on the women's team.

But perhaps the biggest promoter of transgenderism was academia. We even had to call out the U.S. Air Force Academy for promoting it. Many prestigious private schools, too, taught this twisted ideology to young students behind their parents backs.

The most egregious incident occurred at Tennessee Tech when a

drag performer partnered with a student group to put on a display of anti-Catholic bigotry. Fortunately, the university president condemned this outrage cancelling all campus events by the groups involved. He said that he was “also offended by disparaging mockery toward any religious group.”

In addition to being heavily involved in the fight against abortion and transgenderism, we had to contend with expressions of anti-Catholicism that we thought were long over.

We had to deal with Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene. She insulted Catholics by saying “Satan’s controlling the Church.” We called for an apology. When she refused, we sent a letter to the House Ethics Committee calling on them to levy sanctions against her for her anti-Catholic remarks. Greene is an outspoken Republican, and this exchange highlighted our independent streak.

Additionally, we had to call for an investigation of a DOJ lawyer who labeled organizations promoting religious liberty “hate groups.”

We had to intervene after Bridget Fleming, a member of the legislature for Suffolk County, Long Island, introduced a resolution that would have forced all prayers before official business to be “neutral.” We quickly sprung into action and within hours, Fleming’s resolution was dead. We were happy to help because this resolution was in response to an invocation led by Msgr. Robert Batule, who is on our board of directors.

We also had to get involved when the assistant principle of a school in Connecticut was caught on camera saying he would never hire a Catholic teacher “because if someone is raised hardcore Catholic, it’s like they are brainwashed.” We wasted no time contacting officials across the state to hold him accountable.

The media have long been an antagonist of Catholics, and 2022

was no exception. In the fall the Associated Press published a hit piece complaining about the confessional seal. It had no evidence to back up its claim. When we asked the authors to see their evidence, they never got back to us.

The forces seeking to undermine our Judeo-Christian heritage love attacking Christmas, and this year was no exception. In Massachusetts, a human rights commissioner was forced to resign after making anti-Christian statements when residents wanted to display a Christmas tree in the town's public library.

We contacted over 350 Catholics associated with Cardinal Newman chapters at colleges and universities asking them to let us know of any anti-Catholic activities around Christmas.

We condemned a play at Harvard that reimagined Jesus as a "gay Asian." We sounded the alarm over several bloody horror movies with Christmas settings. We confronted government officials in King County Washington seeking to limit their employees abilities to display Christmas decorations. We also called out a Christmas parade in Texas that included drag queens.

In a more tasteful salute to the season, we continued the decades-long tradition of displaying a nativity scene in Central Park. We do this every year not only to honor the birth of Christ, but also to help educate others who wish to display a crèche on public property about the rules.

In 2022, we were delighted to learn our work continues to earn recognition.

Bill Donohue was featured in a documentary on Mother Teresa that originally aired in May on Sky in the U.K. and Ireland; it was also seen in Israel and Australia.

Donohue also received an Honorary Doctorate of Law from Ave Maria Law School. Additionally, the *Catholic Herald* named him as one of the top Catholic Leaders in the United States for

2022.

While the forces working against the Catholic Church and traditional Judeo-Christian values were in overdrive in 2022, we responded with equal vigor. We undertook several major projects and played a part in the important victories in the culture war this year.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

**Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
2021 Year in Review**

Michael P. McDonald, Director of Communications

If one considers the hostility the Catholic Church and traditional Judeo-Christian values faced from the Biden Administration, corporations, education, and the perpetually aggrieved activist class, 2021 was a long year. However, the Catholic League managed to achieve many victories.

Out of all the enemies hostile to the Catholic Church, the government poses the most danger of them all. Particularly, with Joe Biden holding the presidency, the forces of the federal government ushered in many anti-Catholic policies. That this occurred under a self-described “devout Catholic” made this all the more infuriating.

Biden wasted no time attacking teachings at the heart of the Church. On January 20th, his first day in office, Biden issued an executive order allowing males who claim to be female the

right to compete with females in high school and college sports. He also approved of them showering together.

On January 22, Biden said he was “committed to codifying *Roe v. Wade*.”

Then, on January 28, he issued an executive order to rescind the Mexico City Policy, the rule that bars U.S. foreign aid to international non-profit organizations that provide for abortion or abortion counseling. Biden also asked the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to begin the process of rescinding the Trump administration’s Title X family planning rule; among other things, it denies funds to Planned Parenthood and other abortion mills.

On February 14, the White House announced that the Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships “will not prefer one faith over another *or favor religious over secular organizations*.” But the whole point of creating an office of faith-based programs was to prioritize religious social service agencies.

Biden’s decision to appoint Melissa Rogers to head this endeavor was even more telling. He could not have chosen a more seasoned secularist to steer these faith-based entities.

On May 14, our worst fears for the office were confirmed. Rogers met with representatives from six secular organizations. None of them were religion-friendly and some are positively militant in their agenda.

Even on issues where Biden should have found common ground with the Church, he found ways to alienate the bishops. For instance, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) formally opposed the American Rescue Plan Act. Their concern was that there was nothing in the legislation that prohibited funding for abortions.

In an even more serious break with the concerns of the

bishops, Biden pushed for action on the Equality Act. The effect of this legislation is to promote the most comprehensive assault on Christianity ever written into law.

The Equality Act has two major goals: it would amend the 1964 Civil Rights Act to include sexual orientation and gender identity to the definition of sex; it would also significantly undermine the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) by allowing gay rights to trump religious rights.

In May, Biden raised more than eyebrows when he omitted any mention of God in his National Day of Prayer proclamation. What he did was unprecedented: No previous president has failed to mention God since this celebration was created in 1952 by a joint resolution of Congress and signed into law by President Harry Truman.

On September 20, the White House issued a statement saying, "The Administration strongly supports House passage of H.R. 3755, the Women's Health Protection Act of 2021." But because there is not an abortion that Biden could not justify, the proposed law has nothing to do with women's health—it is a pro-abortion bill.

This legislation is anything but "women friendly." It would abolish the requirement that abortion can only be performed by a physician and eliminates health and safety regulations that are specific to abortion facilities. Further, the bill promotes the falsehood that abortion restrictions are racist. Similarly, it promotes the insane notion that men can become pregnant: it has more than two dozen references to "pregnant people"; this is roughly twice as often as they speak of "pregnant women."

With the alarming pace Biden moved to undermine the teachings of the Church, the Catholic League prepared a report, "President Biden's Policies: Departures from Catholic Teachings," that outlines many instances where

his decision-making on important moral issues is at variance with established Catholic teachings.

Biden surrounded himself with henchmen who have long track records of hostility to religious liberties. Xavier Becerra was President Biden's worst nominee for a Cabinet post. The man is a menace to life and liberty and has no business serving in this capacity. The Catholic League found 16 serious flaws with his nomination. While we sent our detailed list of complaints to the Senate, they voted 50-49 to confirm him as Secretary of HHS.

In October, President Biden nominated Joseph Donnelly to be the new U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See. When Donnelly served as a congressman, he was largely pro-life, but when he became a U.S. Senator, he pivoted and joined the pro-abortion camp. There is a reason why Donnelly was co-chair of Catholics for Biden. Like our "devout Catholic" president, he turned rogue.

Biden additionally nominated Dr. Atul Gawande to serve as the assistant administrator of USAID's Bureau for Global Health. Gawande is a pro-abortion zealot writing a graphic piece for Slate in 1998 defending partial birth abortion. If this was not enough, several of his colleagues in the past objected to his utilitarian ethics. The Catholic League supported efforts to defeat his confirmation led by Sen. Marco Rubio. However, at the end of the year, Gawande was confirmed by a vote of 48-31 in a deal that included multiple other nominees.

We did better at securing victories on the state level.

In January, North Dakota State Sen. Judy Lee introduced legislation that would bust the seal of the confessional. The Catholic League quickly jumped into the fray. We mobilized our supporters to put pressure on the legislators to kill this bill. Soon after our supporters expressed their outrage, the legislation was withdrawn.

Another major victory we scored this year, ensuring the due process rights of accused priests, was in the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. On July 21, the court ruled 5-2 that the statute of limitations begins when an alleged crime took place not when the so-called victim recalls the alleged offense. In their ruling, the court cited an amicus brief from the law firm Jones Day hired by the Catholic League.

Over the summer, we learned that Judicial Watch was representing the Center for Medical Progress in a quest to obtain documentation of alleged human organ harvesting at the University of Pittsburgh. According to their probe, organs were harvested while the baby's heart was still beating.

On August 17, Bill Donohue wrote to Pennsylvania Auditor General, Timothy L. DeFoor, asking him to determine whether state and federal funds were being used by Pitt for arguably criminal activity. This was another victory because in September the university agreed to have its fetal tissue research practices independently reviewed.

While the forces of the federal government working against traditional Catholic values created challenges, we unfortunately witnessed a massive sea change on the part of the corporations.

For instance, Major League Baseball (MLB) decided to get involved in politics and promote social justice causes in America; however, MLB has no problem working with Communist China to increase revenue. This is the same communist regime that is committing the biggest violation of human rights, particularly the right to religious liberty, in the world today. To call out MLB for this hypocrisy, Bill Donohue wrote an open letter to the Commissioner of Baseball, Rob Manfred, and called on our supporters to contact him as well. Manfred got belted by our email base.

To cite another example, Cigna's employment policy reads like

something that was penned by some fanatical dean on a college campus. Asking employees if they are Christian is troubling, but what makes it so serious is that it is being done for malicious reasons. Instructing Christian staffers that they are unjustly benefiting from what Cigna calls “religious privilege” is obscene. When we listed the email contact for the head media staffer, our subscribers jumped on it and registered their outrage.

Disney has a long history of offending Catholics. For many years, it partnered with the movie distribution company, Miramax, owned by Bob and Harvey Weinstein, releasing a series of anti-Catholic films. When it took over ABC, it was responsible for more bigoted fare.

In today’s woke culture, Disney has apologized to just about every group they have offended over the years. Every group except for Catholics that is. To remedy this, we once again enlisted our supporters to express their ire with this situation to the head honchos at Disney.

While corporations are largely succumbing to cancel culture and woke ideologies, the Catholic League continued to fight and has been successful in making them relent on some of their more egregious violations.

On January 24, Catholic World Report (CWR) received notice from Twitter that its account had been locked for hateful conduct when it described HHS Assistant Secretary Rachel Levine as “a biological man identifying as a transgender woman.”

Three hours after we listed the email address of a key official at Twitter, asking our subscribers to protest its decision to freeze CWR’s account, Twitter reversed itself.

Institutions of higher learning have long used their positions to promote radical left-wing causes. In 2021, we have seen this radical spirit seep down into larger swaths of the

education establishment.

A sex education bill was being considered in some states that was the most wildly irresponsible assault on common decency and common sense ever proposed. It had little to do with sex education; rather, it was a radical sex engineering bill. Indeed, it was the most extreme attempt to transform the norms and values of young people ever envisioned. We fought it and will continue to do so wherever it appears.

As the new school year began, what children learn became one of the biggest flash points in the culture war. With this as our backdrop, the Catholic League reviewed many prominent history and government textbooks.

One thing became abundantly apparent from our deep dive into these textbooks; namely, the current curriculum provides a biased perspective against traditional and Catholic values. By and large, these textbooks present religion, traditional values, and conservatism in a negative light.

In 2021, activist organizations also joined the culture war on Catholicism.

The bishops were their favorite targets. Ultimately, this stemmed from Biden's radical departures from Catholic teachings. On June 16, the bishops met to discuss how to address this situation. They agreed to formulate a teaching document on the Eucharist. On November 15, they met to complete their task. While the final document did not address the problems Biden created, that did not stop the activists from attacking them.

We often heard that the bishops were partisan hacks attacking Biden to do the Republican Party's bidding. They were wrong to make such a claim. *The Catholic League issued a report showing that some bishops gave praise or criticism to presidents from both parties based on particular policies.*

Nevertheless, the National Catholic Reporter continued to promote this idea. We reached out to our supporters who kindly bombarded the Reporter with emails.

In addition to the Reporter, Faithful America and Faith in Public Life, two groups funded by atheist billionaire and Catholic-hater George Soros, also attacked the bishops. Again, our supporters let their voices be heard.

However, attacks on the bishops were not limited to failed journalists or Soros-funded paid activists. Even politicians heaped insults on the bishop. Rep. Jared Huffman tweeted, "If they're [the Catholic bishops] going to politically weaponize religion by 'rebuking' Democrats who support women's reproductive choice, then a 'rebuke' of their tax-exempt status may be in order." After our supporters lambasted him, he changed his tune.

Unfortunately, the activists did not just limit their attacks on the Church to insults and threats. In 2021, we saw a continuation of the vandalism and destruction of Catholic property.

If there was one Catholic target the activists loved going after in 2021, it was St. Junípero Serra. The 18th century priest did more for the rights of indigenous peoples than any of his contemporaries, yet activists across California, including Gov. Gavin Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, have removed his statue and name from the public square.

Even this year's commemoration of September 11th offered the activists a chance to attack. At least for patriotic Americans, the 20th anniversary of 9/11 carries great significance, but it has a special meaning for Christians. We recalled the sacrifice of millions of faithful Americans who have given their lives to defend this great nation over the years. The activists used the occasion to compare faithful

Americans to the Taliban.

Over Thanksgiving, it was revealed that the Salvation Army's elites made common cause with the activists in promulgating Critical Race Theory. The International Salvation Army issued a lengthy report, "Let's Talk About Racism," that accuses white people of being racists and therefore must apologize while arguing that America is an inherently racist society.

The Catholic League issued a comprehensive report analyzing the initial statement from the Salvation Army and the hypocrisy in their efforts to cover their tracks. Once again, our supporters expressed their ire and hopefully the elites at the Salvation Army will stop this nonsense that gives a bad name to their noble volunteers.

It is all the rage among elites in many quarters to sanction sex transitioning for minors. The Catholic League had enough of this madness and called it for what it is—child abuse.

We raised the alarm all year on this issue. Over the summer, we produced a detailed report that highlighted the most serious physical and psychological harm that these procedures can cause. Additionally, we looked at how the subject is taught in school.

In 2021, the U.S. Supreme Court made several strong rulings defending religious liberty. First, the Court dealt a blow to church restrictions in California. This led to a slew of victories over states limiting the ability to worship. Later in the year, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Catholic foster care agencies can reject gay couples from adopting children. This was a huge victory for religious liberty.

However, not everyone is a fan of religious liberty. For instance, at the end of the year, Mollie Paige Mumau, who was listed as a member of the board of directors for the National Education Association (NEA), took to social media attacking

those who sought a religious exemption from vaccine mandates. She specifically said they deserved to lose their jobs, get seriously ill, and die. Additionally, she recommended that they be shot for not getting the vaccine.

Bill Donohue sent a letter to the NEA urging the leadership to remove Mumau from her position on the board. Within a week, she was no longer employed at her school leaving her with no standing in education. The Catholic League was the only civil rights group in the nation to weigh in on this fight.

Another fight the Catholic League found itself embroiled in December revolved around politicians sharing Christmas pictures on Twitter that had nothing to do with Christmas. Bill Donohue contacted the offices of Rep. Thomas Massie and Rep. Lauren Boebert when they shared pictures of their families in front of Christmas trees with guns. He asked them to remember that Christmas is not about the 2nd Amendment, but instead it is about Jesus.

Speaking of Christmas displays, the Catholic League continued its decades long tradition of displaying a nativity scene in Central Park. We do this every year not only to honor the birth of Christ, but also to help educate others who wish to display a Crèche on public property about the rules.

Just days before Christmas, we had a very satisfying ending to a dispute with Costco. The editorial director of the store's monthly magazine, *Costco Connection*, wrote a short essay in the December edition about the month's holidays. He insulted Christians with a short and snide account of Christmas. By contrast, he offered a longer and glowing treatment of Hanukkah and Kwanzaa. Our email subscribers jumped all over this and let him know what they thought of his article. He then nervously called Bill Donohue trying to walk it back. But the damage was done, and he got nowhere with Bill, who set him straight.

Ultimately, the forces working against us will fail, and no small part of their inevitable failure stems from the Catholic League's dogged determination to fight for what is right. We will continue to speak the truth and boldly take a stand.

In a bold defense of the Church, Bill Donohue released his new book *The Truth About Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes*. In its pages, he sets the record straight and defends the Church.

Additionally, the Catholic League launched a new YouTube series. The "Catholic League Forum" takes a timely look at the big issues threatening our Church and freedoms in pithy and entertaining segments.

With so many forces working against us, the Catholic League not only continues to find new ways to fight but more importantly score significant victories. While no one can guarantee what 2022 might bring, with the fantastic support of our members, the Catholic League will continue the staunch defense of the Church and undoubtedly secure more victories.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

**CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS
2020 YEAR IN REVIEW**

Bill Donohue

When I became president and CEO of the Catholic League in 1993, the lion's share of anti-Catholic bigotry stemmed from

the entertainment industry and the media. Fast forward to today and we find that the primary source of anti-Catholicism is government.

In other words, we are regressing. It is one thing to be disparaged, even viciously so; it is quite another to be discriminated against.

The first serious discriminatory act of the year took place in Utah.

Utah Rep. Angela Romero, a Democrat, sponsored a bill that would have gutted the seal of confession. She said it was necessary because priests learn of the sexual abuse of minors in confession and do not report it to the authorities.

On January 13, I wrote Romero a letter asking her two questions. She maintained that sexual abusers confide to priests in the confessional about the nature of their crimes, and yet nothing ever comes of it. I asked her to identify just one perpetrator who ever made such a claim. She could not.

She could not answer my other question either. I wanted to know why she was seeking to breach the confidentiality of the priest-penitent privilege but showed zero interest in busting privileges afforded lawyer-client and psychologist-patient relationships. Don't they learn of sexual abuse behind closed doors?

We asked our email subscribers to contact the Utah Speaker of the House, Rep. Brad Wilson, seeking his help in opposing this bill. He publicly said he did not support it. Rep. Romero huffed and puffed, saying she would go forward with her bill. In the end, she did not. Our supporters overwhelmed her fellow lawmakers with their objections.

Almost all of those whom we seek to help are from the United States, but there are exceptions. The most notable one for us in 2020 was Australian Cardinal George Pell. After years of

being dragged through the courts for crimes he never committed, he was finally exonerated on April 6 when Australia's High Court unanimously overturned his conviction on five counts. The whole controversy was a sham from the very beginning.

I was proud to tell the media of our role. Starting on March 12, 2013, we issued 24 news releases in our defense of the beleaguered cardinal. Our statements to the media were widely distributed in Australia and the United States. "This will go down in history as one of the most egregious instances of injustice ever visited upon a high-ranking member of the Catholic clergy," I said.

In the United States, New York Archbishop Cardinal Timothy Dolan was the target of one of the most unprincipled and well-orchestrated attacks against a bishop to surface in many years. His offense? He said nice things about President Donald Trump in a conference call.

We wasted no time taking on the bullies. From the *National Catholic Reporter* to the George Soros-funded Faith in Public Life, we identified and confronted Dolan's foes. They were not interested in disagreeing with him. No, they sought to shut him up. They failed.

On March 2, we received good news. The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled that it would review a Superior Court decision in a case involving the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. In 2019, we entered an amicus brief in defense of the diocese.

The question before the court was whether a grand jury could decide whether the statute of limitations starts at the time of the injury (which is typical) or, as the plaintiff sought in this case, at the time when she was awakened to the gravity of her alleged victimization.

Renee A. Rice said she was molested 40 years ago by a priest; he denies it outright. She further maintains that two bishops

tried to cover it up, even though the diocese sent her a letter *10 years before her lawsuit*, encouraging her to come forward about her alleged abuse. Her attorneys said the clock determining the start of the statute of limitations should begin in 2018, at the time of the grand jury report on clergy sexual abuse. That is when it occurred to her, they contended, that she was a victim.

When the case was formally taken up by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, we filed another amicus brief, represented once again by lawyers from the Jones Day firm in Pittsburgh. Oral arguments were heard on October 20.

One of the most left-wing radicals in Congress is Rep. Rashida Tlaib. On March 16, I wrote to Rep. Ted Deutch, head of the House Committee on Ethics, asking that the Committee issue a letter of reprimand to the Palestinian extremist.

The day before, Tlaib retweeted a post from activist David Hogg that read, "Don't let this administration address COVID-19 like our national gun violence epidemic. F**k a National day of prayer, we need immediate comprehensive action." [Both tweets did not use asterisks.]

Tlaib has a history of using filthy language, so what she said was not a shocker. Still, she is a sitting congresswoman and deserved to be sanctioned. We did not have any illusion about her being reprimanded—Congress is not good about levying penalties against their own—but we knew our request would become part of her personnel file, so if she were to act up again, it would raise the chances of her being sanctioned.

We know Tlaib got stung: after getting bombarded with emails from our supporters, she tried to walk back her obscene assault. Message delivered.

Another left-wing extremist is Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC). I wrote to her on August 3rd when she lashed out, without provocation, at Father Damien, the 19th century priest

who gave his life serving lepers on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. Referring to a statue of him in the U.S. Capitol, AOC said, "This is what patriarchy and white supremacist culture looks like!"

"Your remarks evince an offensive ethnocentrism," I said to the New York congresswoman. "You disrespected the people of Hawaii: It is they who hold Father Damien in high regard. You should be careful not to judge a people's culture and history through your own provincial lens."

Once again, our email subscribers chimed in, letting AOC know what they thought about her assault on this heroic priest.

In 2017, we came to the aid of Notre Dame Law School professor Amy Coney Barrett. She was nominated by President Trump for a seat on an appellate court. The outburst of anti-Catholicism that she experienced was a disgraceful moment in American history.

We are happy to report that our relentless defense of Barrett, and our effort to shame those who unjustly attacked her, paid off. We have evidence that our news releases on those who were maligning her were read by senate staffers. So when she was nominated to be on the Supreme Court in 2020, we were ready to do battle again.

We predicted that Barrett would not have to endure the kind of barrage against her that she experienced in 2017. We were right. Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who accused Barrett of being driven by Catholic dogma, pulled back this time, making sure not to make any more anti-Catholic remarks. Ditto for Sen. Dick Durbin. He had made Catholic-baiting comments when Barrett was up for the appellate seat. He tamed himself this time around.

In our defense of Barrett, we issued 10 news releases, garnering 32 media hits, putting everyone on notice. We also mobilized Catholics to contact Senator Charles Grassley, who

chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2017; they did so in droves, as Grassley himself admitted. It was too close to the election to go down this road again.

Barrett handled herself well, disarming her critics with her brilliance and poise. We were only too happy to defend her once again on TV and radio, and in granting interviews to newspapers and internet sources.

The biggest story of the year outside of the presidential race was Covid-19. We never expected to be drawn into this health crisis, but we were. Many cities and states were run by mayors and governors who abused their office, overreaching their authority. While emergency situations beckon emergency decrees, the uneven, and indeed unjust, application of shutdowns in many parts of the country were cause for grave concern.

On March 27, at the beginning of the shutdowns, I enunciated the Catholic League's position. "Whenever religious liberty collides with public health, the government is obliged to put the least restrictive measures on religion." A few weeks later, we supported U.S. District Judge Justin Walker when he invoked a temporary restraining order blocking Louisville Mayor Greg Fischer's ban on drive-in church services.

The Catholic League was instrumental in a big victory that involved attempts to justify curtailment of the Eucharist; the abridgements were purportedly invoked because of public health concerns. At the end of May, Howard County Maryland Executive Calvin Bell announced that he was going to ban "the consumption of food or beverage of any kind before, during, or after religious services, including food or beverage that would typically be consumed as part of a religious service." This would, in effect, ban the distribution of sacramental wine at Mass.

We immediately alerted our email subscribers, noting that this

was an issue of monumental importance, one that should trigger a strong response from Catholics no matter where they lived. Our supporters came through, overwhelming County officials. I know this because I received a phone call from Scott Peterson, spokesman for the County. He said he was “bombarded” with letters of protest. The ban was withdrawn.

It wasn't just the initial reaction of government officials that proved to be worrisome: the ACLU got into the act supporting the shutdowns. This appeared strange given the organization's defense of individual rights and its historic disregard for any other issue, whether it be national security or civil unrest. Yet as I have shown in two books and many articles on the ACLU, it is anything but a principled organization. I issued a lengthy analysis of its hypocritical handling of the legal issues attendant to the shutdowns.

The ACLU took advantage of Covid-19 by suing California Gov. Gavin Newsom for not letting convicted felons out of prison. This was hardly a shocker: the civil libertarians have long been opposed to prisons. It also rallied to the defense of protestors who violated social distancing rules, making an exception to its newly found interest in public health.

Matters came to a head when New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor de Blasio okayed mobs taking to the streets to protest racial injustice—often engaging in violence—while putting restrictions on houses of worship. At the end of June, U.S. District Court Judge Gary Sharpe issued a preliminary injunction, saying they exceeded their authority. He also chided them for “encouraging what they knew was a flagrant disregard for the outdoor limits and social distancing rules.”

At the end of the year, Cuomo put more restrictions on certain neighborhoods in Brooklyn. His latest edict put severe limits on the number of people who could attend churches or synagogues. He admitted that his occupancy limits would be “most impactful on houses of worship.” That was not too smart.

The U.S. Supreme Court informed him that he exceeded his authority and that his order could not be implemented, pending a review by the 2nd Circuit Court of Appeals.

The high court did the same thing to California Gov. Gavin Newsom a week later. His draconian restrictions were put on hold while the district judge who approved his order reviewed the ruling against Cuomo. These were two key victories for religious liberty, and Justice Amy Coney Barrett proved to be decisive in both cases.

The riots that swept the nation following the death of George Floyd, a black man who had a run-in with Minneapolis police, proved beyond a doubt that the expressed public health concerns of government authorities—social distancing must always be practiced—were politically expedient. No one who protested faced any penalty for flouting Covid-19 protocols. Yet church services were curtailed in the name of safety.

What Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan called “The Summer of Love” turned out to be “The Summer of Hate.” The hate mongers voiced their hatred of America and of Western civilization, tearing down iconic statues on public property. They also targeted churches, many of which were Catholic. It kept the Catholic League busy seeking to answer the deluge of media calls. We detailed the damage that was done.

Bibles were burned, churches were torched, schools were trashed, and Catholic graves were defaced. The vandals also destroyed statues of Saint Junípero Serra, the 18th-century missionary priest who did more to secure human rights for Indians than anyone else. We contacted the District Attorney of Marin County supporting a plea by San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone asking that the six vandals who toppled the statue of Saint Serra in San Rafael on October 12 be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Our first victory of the year was won against a media outlet.

It took place on January 3rd when we squeezed an apology from the CBS affiliate in St. Petersburg, Florida, WTSP. It falsely claimed that a Sarasota Catholic bishop had been charged with sexually abusing a child. The bishop was Protestant. We jumped on this issue immediately, and our protest resulted in an apology.

Trevor Noah's "The Daily Shows" (like Jon Stewart before him) is a hotbed of anti-Catholic bigotry. He got so bad in 2020 that it impelled us to contact the board of directors of ViacomCBS, the parent company of his Comedy Central show. Here is a sample of what I wrote on May 20. "Noah is cruel. You have a bigot in your employ. The evidence that is being forwarded to you [we provided extensive documentation of his attacks] is conclusive. You can do something about it. Please do."

Did the memo to the board work? Noah certainly zipped it for the rest of the year.

Media bias is most often reflected in the content of their stories. But sometimes there are acts of omission that reflect bias. Such was the case when the bishops' conference released the latest data on clergy sexual abuse in late June.

It was revealed that during the period July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019, 37 allegations had been made by current minors against almost 50,000 priests and deacons. During this time, 8 of the allegations were substantiated, 7 were unsubstantiated, 6 were unable to be proven, 12 were still being investigated, 3 were referred to religious orders, and 1 was referred to another diocese.

This means that .016% of the allegations made could be substantiated. To put it differently, 99.98% of priests and deacons (there are twice as many priests) did not have a substantiated accusation made against them. The media failed to report this. Worse, those who prepared the document and

shared the data failed to do the computation. They always do.

Education is another source of anti-Catholicism, especially these days. We scored a victory, which was shared with others, when our fight against public control of private schools in New York State won. We beat back an initiative that would have allowed the public school industry the right to police Catholic and other private schools. We fought this in 2018 and 2019, outlining to state education officials our objections. In 2020, the power grab was shelved.

Teaching students to hate America is very popular among radical educators. There is nothing new about this, save for the fact that the desire to do so has penetrated the textbooks used by elementary and secondary students, not just college students. Matters got worse when the *New York Times* rolled out its "1619 Project," a curriculum-centered program that teaches students how racist America is.

Students learn that America was not founded in 1776 in a fight for liberty; they learn it was founded in 1619 in a fight for slavery. Of course, they learn that Christians were responsible for slavery.

We struck back. We sent to every school district that had adopted the "1619 Project" a detailed history of the racist legacy of the *New York Times*. The family that started the newspaper were slave owners. The racist commentary and the racist workplace of the *Times* were amply cited. We told the educators who received our work on this issue that they had a moral obligation to tell their students the truth about the racist origins and developments of the "newspaper of record."

Filipe Castro, a Texas A&M University professor, earned the ire of the Catholic League. He posted some of the most obscene and patently anti-Catholic comments on social media, and apparently was going to get away with it. We jumped on this issue, publishing his vicious assaults—they included physical

threats against Catholics—sending our evidence to the media, university officials, the Board of Regents, the campus newspaper, the governor and his staff, the regional accrediting body, and various congressional and state lawmakers.

We heard from students, alumni, the campus newspaper, the head of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission, and the media. Castro would not talk to anyone, but we sure did. At the very least, his behavior is now part of his public record.

In November, with funds raised by our members, we were scheduled to have the American Association of Superintendents and Administrators send an eblast to its list of subscribers across the nation. The digital post, which I wrote, alerted superintendents to what is acceptable and what is not acceptable regarding Christmas celebrations in the schools.

It was titled, “No Need to Cancel Christmas.” We made the case that while Christianity cannot be promoted, that does not mean that schools are required to censor every expression of Christmas. “No federal court has ever ruled that Christmas must be censored in the schools.”

But then, at the last minute, the officials at this organization backed out of the deal. Of the six education organizations that we contacted, all but one either rejected our ad or did not get back to us (the one that agreed to go with it was a quarterly, making the timing impractical).

Two weeks before Christmas we scored an important victory. An upstate New York county government denied the local Knights of Columbus Council the right to display a nativity scene outside the office building. Our intervention led to it being displayed inside the building next to a menorah and Christmas tree.

The year ended on a worrisome note. We had plenty of reasons

to be concerned about the kinds of religious liberty policies that President Joe Biden might promote. After all, it was the Obama-Biden administration that gave us the Health and Human Services mandate forcing Catholic entities such as the Little Sisters of the Poor to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plan.

While President Trump alienated many people with his persona, he did more to protect and advance religious liberty than any president in American history. What Biden will do remains to be seen, but from what he has pledged to do—pushing for legislation that would roll back the religious exemptions afforded by Trump—the assault on religious liberty is likely to quicken. No matter, the Catholic League will be up to the battle.

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

Bill Donohue

Twenty years ago, I wrote that “the most invidious form of anti-Catholicism is that which emanates from elite circles.” I also noted that “there is also a brand of anti-Catholicism that comes from less urbane quarters, from places that target the undereducated. And no one is better at doing this than Chick Publications.”

In 2016, the founder of that company, Jack Chick, died at the age of 92.

We fought him for years, exposing his efforts to convince Protestants of how “un-Christian” Catholics are. He was ahead of his time in his ability to get his message out: he not only published books and magazines, he printed an endless stream of 3×5 inch cartoon-like booklets that were released all over the world. “Are Roman Catholics Christian?” was one of his most famous.

Do you know who really hated Jack Chick? Liberal Catholics. They are able to demonstrate tremendous tolerance when the Church is beaten up by the establishment, but don’t let anyone accuse them of not being able to think for themselves. That is why they rarely complain when those in the artistic community, education, the media, and the entertainment industry, bash Catholicism—they desperately want to be accepted by the secular elites.

Jack Chick’s contribution to anti-Catholicism, significant though it was, is not the kind of fare that should worry Catholics these days. Assaults on religious liberty is what should concern them—the Catholic League gives them priority—and this is especially true when the agent of hostility is the government.

When the Church is sued for administering the sacraments, we can no longer take religious liberty for granted. That is why we fought back. The good news is that we won.

In 2014, a lawsuit was filed in Louisiana that, had it succeeded, would have effectively gutted the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We quickly filed an amicus brief, coming to the defense of Father Jeff Bayhi. He was sued by the parents of a girl for failing to report to the authorities that she was abused by a lay member of the parish (who has since passed away). He reportedly learned of this in the confessional, which is precisely why he did not report it.

After first losing in the State Supreme Court, we won in the

State District Court. The final decision came in October when the Louisiana Supreme Court upheld that decision, stating that the seal of the confessional must be respected by the government as a matter of religious liberty.

Still unresolved is the right of the federal government to dictate to Catholic non-profits what they must cover in their healthcare plans. This is an issue we have been fighting for years, and 2016 was no exception. We took advantage of every media opportunity to press our case against the Obama administration's Health and Human Services mandate.

It is currently in limbo: the U.S. Supreme Court dodged the issue by ordering the lower courts to reconsider the constitutionality of the mandate. If it became law, it would mean that such entities as the Little Sisters of the Poor would have to pay for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans.

The justices asked both sides to submit new legal briefs, requesting that alternatives be explored. Not until a ninth justice is named to the high court will this issue be settled. President-elect Donald Trump has pledged to appoint judges who respect religious liberties, so the prospects are encouraging.

What is not encouraging is the sight of lawyers employed by the federal government who show nothing but contempt for religious liberty. To be specific, a document was issued in September by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights that set off the alarms. I called it "the most anti-First Amendment report issued by any agency of the federal government."

I was referring to a report, *Peaceful Coexistence: Reconciling Non-Discrimination Principles with Civil Liberties*. The title was a misnomer: no attempt was made to reconcile anything. Instead, the document made it very clear that when there is a showdown between non-discrimination and religious liberty, the latter should yield. Never mind that religious liberty is

enshrined in the First Amendment, and that non-discrimination is not part of the Bill of Rights—we need to reconstruct the Constitution.

According to Martin R. Castro, the Obama appointee who authored this report, “The phrases ‘religious liberty’ and ‘religious freedom’ will stand for nothing except for hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any other form of intolerance.”

Castro did not define what he means by “Christian supremacy,” but it is not a stretch to think he meant nativity scenes at Christmastime, and other “offenses.” Fortunately, many others besides the Catholic League pushed back hard—the bishops jumped on this as well—the result being that there were no legs to Castro’s gambit.

The big news of 2016, of course, was the election of Trump. We were drawn into the presidential race, though we stayed clear of endorsing anyone. Our first foray came early in the year when many in the media misrepresented to Pope Francis what Trump said about immigration, and then distorted the pope’s response. I am happy to say that I got a chance to correct the record when I was interviewed by Fox News as part of the lead news story of the night.

The pope was set up. He was told that Trump “wants to deport 11 million illegal immigrants, thus separating families.” That was patently false. Earlier, Trump said on “Meet the Press” that he would not split up families, explicitly saying, “No, we’re going to keep the families together.”

Another media falsehood was floated when reporters condensed the pope’s reaction to Trump’s alleged position, thus distorting his words. “Trump is Not a Christian” is how the media characterized the pope’s reaction. What the pope

actually said was, "A person who thinks *only* about building walls...is not a Christian." He added, "I say only that this man is not a Christian if he has said things like that...and in this, *I give the benefit of the doubt*." The qualifying words that I italicized were conveniently omitted from most news stories.

I did more than correct the record when it came to Hillary Clinton: I unintentionally set the table for the FBI to disable her. Here's what happened.

It started out innocently enough. On August 31, I read a front-page story in the *New York Post* on how former congressman Anthony Weiner used his own four-year-old son, Jordan, as a "chick magnet" to lure sexual relations with women. Weiner's wife, Huma Abedin, is a top aide to Clinton. This was the second story in three days on Weiner's perversions.

Having been sickened by the abuse scandal in the Church, as well as by the way the media have played it—they rarely report on the sexual abuse of minors in other communities, secular or religious—I filed a formal complaint with the authorities asking for an investigation of Weiner.

My request was honored. In the course of looking for child pornography on Weiner's laptop, the New York Police Department found that his computer was shared by Abedin. Not only that, emails sent by her to Clinton on her private server were discovered. The NYPD then contacted the FBI and it started a new probe.

After she lost to Trump, Clinton blamed FBI director James Comey for losing the election. Specifically, she said it was his announcement on October 28 that a new round of investigations were under way that turned voters against her. Of course, had she not had her own private server when she was Secretary of State, this would not have become an issue.

Moreover, had it not been for my complaint to the New York City branch of the New York State Administration for Children's Services, requesting that Weiner be investigated for child abuse, Comey would not have gotten involved. And had it not been for media bias against priests, I would not have felt obliged to press this case. It is strange how history unfolds.

Hollywood had a field day in 2016 with the issue of priestly sexual abuse. Though the latest data show that exactly .01 percent of the Catholic clergy had a credible accusation made against them for sexually abusing minors, Hollywood fed the media's appetite for Catholic bashing when it gave "Spotlight" the Oscar for "best picture." The film was based on the scandal in the Boston archdiocese.

The movie itself was not the problem—the scandal was as real as it was devastating—the problem was projecting a falsehood to the public: the media, and many in Hollywood (including those connected to the movie), sold the pernicious notion that the scandal is ongoing. It is not: the Church has a better record on this issue than any institution in the nation. It is in the public schools, and in places such as Hollywood, where child rape is commonplace, though there is little interest in pursuing them.

Another facet to this story is the way state lawmakers seek to "correct" the problem of the sexual abuse of minors by writing laws that target only private (read: Catholic) schools. New York and Pennsylvania were the two most aggressive states pushing to selectively punish Catholic offenders while letting public school molesters off the hook. We fought all such patently biased bills, doing so with great effect in New York.

The Catholic League started its war on these discriminatory bills in March, and in June we declared victory: the bill by Assemblywoman Margaret Markey, like all her previous ones, failed. Better still, after more than a decade of vindictively

sticking it to the Catholic Church—only once did she include the public schools in her bill—she not only lost, she was voted out of office.

We pulled out all the stops to defeat Markey. On April 1, I wrote to everyone in the New York State legislature requesting that bills which suspend the statute of limitations for crimes involving the sexual abuse of minors be reconsidered. Instead of applying only to private schools, I asked that they consider bills that only apply to the public schools. My point, of course, was to point out the absurdity, the hypocrisy, and the injustice of selectively pursuing such crimes.

I also wrote a full-page ad that was placed in the Albany *Times Union* exposing these machinations. Titled “Sexual Abuse Lobby Is Agenda-Ridden,” I laid bare the activists and lawyers whose goal it was to punish Catholic molesters while allowing public school employees to escape scot-free. It hit a chord.

The hero in this struggle was Cardinal Timothy Dolan. He worked overtime to secure justice. Also active was Brooklyn Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio, a good man who was libeled by Markey: she accused him of once offering to bribe her in return for dropping her bill. We called her out for this smear. Her stunt failed as even many on her side didn’t believe her. She had no evidence whatsoever.

We were delighted when another vengeful public servant, Pennsylvania Attorney General Kathleen Kane, was driven from office. Like Markey, she had it out for the Catholic Church, and like the New York lawmaker, the Catholic League tangled with Kane, pointing out how duplicitous she was. Her maniacal interest in pursuing old cases involving Catholic schools, while turning a blind eye to abuse incidents in non-Catholic settings, was abhorrent.

What drove Kane from office, however, was not the voters: she

was convicted on nine counts, including two felony perjury charges, for leaking grand jury information, and then lying about it. Justice was done, even if she got away with her unethical assault on the Catholic Church.

Justice was also done when the courts repeatedly turned back ACLU attempts to force Catholic hospitals to violate the teachings of the Catholic Church. The issues that the ACLU seized on were abortion, contraception, and sterilization; these are non-negotiable subjects for Catholic hospitals.

At the beginning of the year, San Francisco Superior Judge Ernest Goldman dismissed the ACLU's attempt to force Mercy Medical Center in California to carry out sterilization procedures. In the spring, the ACLU lost in the U.S. District Court of Michigan when it sought to coerce Trinity Health Corporation, a Catholic non-profit, to perform abortions. It also made another failed effort to revisit the Mercy Medical Center case, this time supported by the California Medical Association.

In all of these instances, the ACLU proved why it has a reputation for being a foe of religion, and there is no religion it seeks to upend more than Catholicism.

Sometimes our role in fighting anti-Catholicism doesn't yield quick results, but when we eventually win, the victory is still sweet.

At the end of last year, I wrote to Tennessee lawmakers who oversee education issues about a serious problem that arose at the University of Tennessee. Its Office of Diversity and Inclusion had literally sought to censor Christmas. Students were warned to make sure that "your holiday party is not a Christmas party in disguise." They were also instructed not to "play games with religious and cultural themes, such as 'Dreidel' or 'Secret Santa.'"

The lawmakers followed through with the requested

investigation and in the spring it was announced that they voted to strip the Office of Diversity and Inclusion of \$337,000 in state funds. Justice was done.

Our protest of a situation at Colorado State University did not result in a clear-cut victory, but it did yield important dividends nonetheless.

The university's student senate proposed a "diversity bill" that granted senate seats to various constituents on campus; those representing adult learning, veterans, the disabled, LGBT students, women's groups, and various racial and ethnic groups were recognized. But when students asked for equal treatment for Jewish, Catholic, and Muslim students, they were denied.

I contacted the Dean of Students on this issue, and after much haggling, she said that all parties to the controversy have learned from this experience and that it was an opportunity to grow as an academic community. Much more should have been done, but this is the way many administrators react when pressed by advocacy organizations. It is a safe bet, however, that our message was delivered.

When Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez was embroiled in a fight over a California bill that would have undermined important exemptions to religious schools, we quickly joined his effort. The result was the bill was revised, and the onerous portions were stricken.

The bill would have required religious schools that receive state funds to provide bathrooms based on "gender identity," rather than male-female. It would have required that married dorms be opened to same-sex couples. In fact, the bill permitted the government to decide what "religious practices" and "rules for moral conduct," would be acceptable.

We pushed back, as did others, making basic religious-liberty arguments. While the outcome was auspicious, the very fact

that we had to fight for our religious tenets, suggests how hostile some lawmakers are to Catholicism.

Over Labor Day weekend, there was an ugly incident involving a high school football game in Scottsdale, Arizona. After parents complained, and we learned of what happened, we contacted school officials. An investigation was launched. The outcome was another demonstration of our clout. Here's what occurred.

Prior to a game between a Catholic school and a public school, a statue of Our Blessed Mother was vandalized on the campus of the Catholic school. During the game, a student dressed as Jesus paraded up and down the sidelines, mocking Catholics.

The vandals were gross: they attached a sex toy to the lower half of the Virgin Mary statue, and over its head they put a mask of Hillary Clinton. The "dancing Jesus" character continued his stunt in the second half of the game, even after parents complained.

We contacted the Interim Superintendent of the Scottsdale Unified School District and she responded professionally, and with dispatch. She apologized for what happened, commenced an investigation, and thanked the Catholic League for its intervention.

Macy's earned our ire when it fired a senior store detective at a store in Queens, New York for merely holding to Catholic beliefs on sexuality. After a woman and her daughter found a man dressed as a woman in the women's restroom, they complained, and the detective arranged for him to be removed; the cross-dressing man was told to use the men's room.

However, the offending male reported this incident to Macy's officials, and, incredibly, they informed the detective that he was the problem. Unbeknownst to him, Macy's allows cross-dressing men to use the ladies room. The detective said he was unaware of this policy, adding that it ran against his

Catholic convictions. But he insisted he would nonetheless enforce the policy going forward. This wasn't good enough—he was fired. The man secured an attorney and the case was taken up by the New York State Division of Human Rights.

This is thought control: the man was terminated for his religious beliefs—not his behavior. Consequently, we pounded the mega-department store with one news release after another. In addition, I wrote an op-ed page ad in the *New York Times* alerting the public to this outrageous condition. To be sure, Macy's got a black eye as a result, but at year's end there was no final adjudication to this vindictive act.

As we saw in the case involving the University of Tennessee, there are occasions when our initial involvement does not lead to a desired result, but eventually it does. This, we believe, will be the case with our protest of the ABC show, "The Real O'Neals."

The show is loosely based on the life of Dan Savage, a vile anti-Catholic whose vulgar language is a staple of his routine. That Disney, which owns ABC, would give this man a platform (he is also an associate producer of the show) does not speak well for the supposedly family-friendly entertainment giant.

On February 29, the *New York Times* ran an op-ed page ad I wrote, "Shame on Disney-ABC." It detailed our objections to the persistent mocking of Catholicism by cast characters, and underscored our central objection to the program: Dan Savage's role. Commenting on Savage's history of hate speech, I said, "His filthy remarks about Jesus and Our Blessed Mother are so over the top that they would make Larry Flynt blush."

The ratings of "The Real O'Neals" were not great, but Disney-ABC did not want to appear to bow to pressure, so it stood by it for another season. We predict it will be pulled in 2017.

Mother Teresa was canonized on the Sunday of Labor Day

weekend. The media, for the most part, treated her fairly. In anticipation of what could have been an onslaught of Catholic bashing, beating up on this saintly woman, I got out in front of the looming controversy by writing a book, *Unmasking Mother Teresa's Critics*.

The book had more footnotes than it did pages, and for a reason: I did not want anyone saying these were just Donohue's unsupported claims. I took on all of her most famous detractors, the late Christopher Hitchens being the most prominent among them.

How much my book contributed to the media's respectful hearing of Mother Teresa's contributions is impossible to know. But if it helped at all, it was surely worthwhile. She was a very special person, and Catholics have every reason to be proud of her.

No year ends without fighting another round of battles over Christmas, and 2016 was no exception. Satanists and atheists proved they have more in common than separates them—they adorned the public square with their protesting symbols on the same sites as nativity scenes, seeking to neuter the meaning of Christmas.

The Catholic League fought and won a battle in the Portland, Oregon area when a school district banned Santa, as well as religious symbols, from the office doors of school employees. The good news is that our protest led district officials to apologize and rescind the ban.

The singing of "Silent Night" was cause for opposition in a Mesa, Arizona school, and a cross atop a crèche was banned in Indiana. Regarding the latter, our side fought back: after the ACLU succeeded in censoring the cross, the folks in Knightstown, Indiana blanketed the town with crosses on lawns, parks, and local shops—they were everywhere!

The election of Donald Trump may signal a change for the

better on religious liberty issues. We will know in due course. No matter what he does, the Catholic League will still be integrally involved in the culture war. We have the determination and the resources to win. Bet on it.