

CATHOLIC LEAGUE FOR RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL RIGHTS 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights 2021 Year in Review

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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.