

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT CHALLENGED; WE RESPOND QUICKLY

The animus against Christmas manifests itself in a myriad of ways, and this year is no exception. We took a pass on some trivial issues, but we jumped right into the fray when more serious attacks were launched.

The anti-Christmas bigots from the Freedom From Religion Foundation threatened a lawsuit against a small Minnesota town because it displayed a nativity scene in a public park. For 23 years, no one in Wadena complained about the crèche in Burlington Northern Park, but after the atheist group made public its threat, along came one resident to complain. The town's lawyer agreed that the display was illegal, and the city council obliged by authorizing its removal.

Bill Donohue wrote an open letter to the city council asking them to reconsider their decision. "There is nothing unconstitutional about putting a nativity scene on public property as long as it is considered a public forum," he said. He further observed that this park was a public forum because it hosts all kinds of community activities. He offered by way of example the Catholic League's nativity scene in Central Park: it has never been challenged, and that's because the park is a public forum. While high court rulings on city-owned crèches are more complicated, they can still pass constitutional muster.

A very different type of assault on Catholic sensibilities was launched by *Cosmopolitan* magazine. It drew a quick rebuke from us.

The cover story of the December edition is titled, "Sex Wish List." The article contains 24 sexual suggestions, all of which exploit the Christian and Jewish holidays. Most

conspicuously, it includes a “Sex-Vent Calendar,” a rip-off of the Advent calendar. It features sexually explicit ideas, the kind we are reluctant to publish in *Catalyst*.

We went public with our denunciation of this offensive edition. We noted that *Cosmopolitan* had long since evolved into a “soft-porn publication,” but “up until now it had at least stayed away from trashing Christmas and Jewish holidays.”

The removal of Christmas symbols from malls operated by Simon Property Group generated such a backlash that they were quickly restored. Rick Hinshaw, our director of communications, called the company’s director of public relations to make sure he understood why the initial decision was wrong.

When asked if we were upset about a red Starbucks Christmas coffee cup unadorned by Christmas symbols, we said no. We reserve our resources for serious issues.

We expect that in the next issue of *Catalyst* we will have more to say on anti-Christmas assaults that occurred in December. Meantime, a Merry Christmas to all.