

CHRISTMAS WARS ABATE; PROGRESS EVIDENT

There are signs that the “War on Christmas” is abating. That the Catholic League has had something to do with it is questioned by no one.

In 2013, we laid down our anchor, sending a message to militant atheists: we will not allow you to occupy the public square unanswered. To be specific, we displayed a gigantic Christmas billboard in Times Square, and we posted digital billboards along two New Jersey highways. We are proud of the fact that we have led the pro-Christmas side of the Christmas wars for two decades.

In 1994, we scored our first major victory when we successfully pressed Barneys, the upscale clothier on Madison Avenue, to remove an obscene manger scene from its storefront window. We erected a nativity scene in Central Park a year later, something we’ve done every year since. In subsequent years, we’ve been actively engaged in scores of skirmishes, winning some and losing some.

An examination of Catholic League activities in the “War on Christmas” is not dispositive, but it is an index of what has been happening in the dominant culture. Our records show that our involvement peaked in the years 2005-2007. Those were the years when we took on Wal-Mart, exacting an apology after we threatened a boycott following revelations that the mega-store was discriminating in its treatment of Christmas. Things got so bad that Jackie Mason and other Jewish leaders joined with us in protesting anti-Christmas attacks.

In 2013, we saw a clear downward tick in attempts to bash Christmas. Indeed, even vandalism was down: the number of nativity scenes being trashed was relatively low. But not all

was well. As usual, public schools and public parks were targeted.

As compared to previous years, the “War on Christmas” in 2013 was led more by national organizations, and less by local activists, than ever before. American Atheists, Freedom from Religion Foundation, the Secular Humanist Association, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Military Religious Freedom Foundation led the way.

This past Christmas, a decided pushback was evident, involving local residents: they took things into their own hands, pressuring local authorities to accede to their reasonable demands.

Contrary to those who sell the bogus idea that the “War on Christmas” is not real, Christians who are fighting back are not obsessed with who is saying “Happy Holidays,” and who is saying “Merry Christmas.” On the contrary, they are fighting those who are bent on banning, trashing, and diluting the public expression of Christmas.