

# Education

January



A Catholic high school student applied for the Jefferson Scholars Program at the University of Virginia. He was asked the following questions about his religion during the course of an interview: “What is your relationship with God?”; “Do you believe in the infallibility of the Pope?”; “What if the Pope said something completely ridiculous, would you follow him anyway?”; and “What are your feelings on women priests?” The league protested this line of inquiry as being inappropriate and intrusive, especially for a state school.

March

**Oxford, OH** – Miami University of Ohio showed the movie *Priest*, despite condemnation of it by the Student Senate as anti-Catholic.

April

**Luis Obispo, CA** – A columnist and a cartoonist mocked Catholicism and attacked the pope in the *Mustang Daily*.

**Amherst, MA** – In a column in the *Massachusetts Daily Collegian*, the newspaper of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, columnist Erin Barnes wrote that “it seems as though some members of the [Catholic] church are so tightly wound that they snap, causing them to perform such unthinkable acts as child molestation and murder at abortion clinics.”

**Kentucky** – The Art Department at Northern Kentucky University announced that it would present an art exhibit entitled, “Immaculate Misconceptions.” The exhibit was to feature artists who had all been raised as Roman Catholics and wanted to display work inspired by the misconceptions they had while learning the faith. In the proposal it said “Works will serve

as an exorcism of sort in an effort to free the artist from misguided fears created by stringent dogmatic concepts that were learned and misconceived." On April 17, the league sent a letter to the president of the university demanding that both the title and the exhibit be withdrawn. Less than two weeks after receiving the league's letter, the school decided to drop the entire exhibit, title and all.

May

In a satirical piece in *Brow Beat*, the Broward Mensa Journal, an "obituary" was featured about a man named Profaccio Unscrupulata. In addition to every Italian stereotype, including giving names such as "Retardo, Cretino, and Imbecilio" to some of the children, the writer took aim at Catholicism as well. "The Rev. Celibato Unfortunato of the Saint Bastardo Roman Catholic Church will offer a Solemn High Requiem Bingo Game...."

**Minneapolis, MN** – In a column in *The Minnesota Daily* disagreeing with cafeteria Catholicism, columnist Charles A. Foster, self-identified as non-Catholic, wrote: "I can imagine what would happen if I tried to take communion. The priest would give me a swig from the chalice and then remind me, quoting Christ, 'This is my blood.' My eyes would bug out and I would involuntarily spit, spraying the priest with a pink mist."

June

**Baltimore, MD** – Christopher Hitchens introduced a screening of his film, *Hell's Angel: Mother Teresa of Calcutta*, a diatribe against Mother Teresa. The film was part of a series on religious fundamentalism which was sponsored by Johns Hopkins University. Based on Hitchens' book, *The Missionary Position*, the film, like the book, is replete with reckless charges, none of which is documented with evidence.

Fall

The play *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You* was performed at Fort Hays State University.

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September

**Louisville, KY** – The Jefferson Community College Chapel hosted the multi-media production of *Pope-Joan: the Hiss of the Snake*, produced by Artswatch. The play contends that a certain Pope John was really “Pope Joan,” a legend refuted by the Catholic Church. The play portrayed the church as being led by men who are obsessed with sex, and even Pope Joan ultimately takes on a lover. Latin phrases were mocked throughout the play (amen was rendered “all-men”). Audience members were given Oreos during a “communion service” and holy cards were treated as sports trading cards.

October

**Yonkers, NY** – In the summer of 1996, Yonkers school board voted to cut funds to support the busing of Catholic school students due to the city’s financial troubles. The Archdiocese of New York announced that it would fight this battle in court. In October, the league sent an overnight copy of its news release to the home of every school board member, pledging to sue the school board. Yonkers then decided that funding would be provided for the entire school year.

**Middletown Township, NJ** – Teachers at a Board of Education meeting distributed an article entitled *Speaking Frankly* which is a publication of the Middletown Township Education Association. By reaching back to the 15th century to make some connection with the political climate in a 20th Century New Jersey municipality, the author bared his bias against Catholicism by misinterpreting Church practices during the Middle Ages.

October

A University student publication, *The Onion*, contained a mock interview of the Pope entitled "Pope Admits: 'God Ain't Said Shit to Me'." In the interview, the Pope is quoted as saying the following: "Seventy-six years I'm bustin' my hump for this mysterious Divine One, and still it's like, 'John Paul who?' Christ." "Just last week," the Pope continued, "I underwent a difficult appendectomy. You'd certainly think the Lord would call to wish me well, right? He didn't so much as send a card. What a d\_\_\_\_." The Pope further states that he is "suppose[d] to be reflecting and shit...on how f\_\_\_\_\_ awesome my life is."

**New York, NY** – The University of Texas displayed the controversial art of artist Manual Ocampo. Ocampo uses religious symbols and images together with objects of disgust and disdain to create his "art." One of Ocampo's paintings exhibited at UT is entitled *Virgin Destroyer*. The painting depicts the Virgin Mary as a cockroach draped in pearls wielding a large knife and liquor bottle.

**Milwaukee, WI** – A painting depicting a large rat sucking at the breast of the Virgin Mary was displayed at Madison High School for several weeks. Pressure from local residents and a Catholic group finally made the principal decide to remove the painting.

October – November

**Fairfax, VA** – An exhibit entitled *Catholic Girls* opened at the George Mason University. The exhibit was a compilation of the work of seven female artists who were raised "under the influence of Catholicism." The curator of the exhibit stated that the artwork expressed "rebellion against the contradictions embodied in the Catholic faith, and the repression of women in particular." Some of the artwork was entitled as follows: "Pizza Pope," "Holy Cow," "Pizza Devil," and "The Relics of Joan of Arc's Part-Time Job."

## November

**Wichita, KS** – A painting by artist Nancy Schwan entitled “Our Lady of the Immaculate Martini” was on exhibit at Friends University. The painting depicted the Virgin Mary wearing a sleeveless tank dress and holding a bottle of liquor. A martini glass rested next to her on a serving tray.

**Greensboro, NC** – The novel *The Old Gringo*, was assigned to students at Grimsley High School. The book treats Catholicism in a despicable fashion. After being contacted by the league, the school board voted 6-5 to keep the book. However, before the Catholic League protested, there was not one school board member who found the book offensive.

## December

**University Park, PA** – A female student at Penn State crafted a huge vagina – in a grotto-like shape – complete with human hair, and placed a statue of Our Blessed Mother within it; it was displayed on the campus lawn in full view of the students, faculty and administrators. Done as a project for an art class, it was removed by school officials after complaints from resident Catholics. The student said that her “work” was a statement about oppression of women in the Catholic Church.

**Erie, PA** – Millcreek Township School District in Erie, Pennsylvania barred students from creating artwork that depicted a nativity scene for the annual “Holiday Card Contest.” After the league threatened a lawsuit, corrective action was immediately taken.

**Long Island, NY** – 7th grade students enrolled in chorus at Wisdom Lane School were forced to choose between attending the Winter Concert on a night that regularly scheduled religious instruction at a nearby Catholic school and missing their religion class. After being contacted by the league, the superintendent of schools stated that the incident was an isolated one, and that it did not reflect district policy and

would not happen again.

**Long Island, NY** – Hofstra University released a student publication, *Nonsense*, that was not only virulently anti-Catholic, it even boasted of its animus. The editor-in-chief, Francis Rizzo, wrote that he was first attracted to writing for *Nonsense* because it was “Short, funny, and not too hard to understand. Oh, yeah, and slightly insulting to Catholics, too.”

**Brooklyn, NY** – A holiday celebration held at Packer Collegiate Institute, a private school, gave due recognition to Kwanzaa and Hanukkah, but made no reference to Christmas. The school altered the lyrics of a well-known holiday melody in order to replace all references to Christmas with the words, “the End of the Year.” Children and audience members were encouraged to celebrate “the End of the Year” and to wish each other a “Happy End of the Year.” After a protest by the league, remedial action was taken and a pledge to treat Christmas fairly in 1997 was made.

**Manhattan Beach, CA** – A public school removed a Christmas tree from school property after a rabbi objected that the tree was a religious symbol. Not only is the tree not a religious symbol, no nativity scene was allowed in the school, yet a Star of David was displayed. The league registered its objections on the CNN program, *Crossfire*.

**Sacramento, CA** – In a public school a ban was placed on celebrating Christmas because school officials held that Christianity “was not a world religion.”