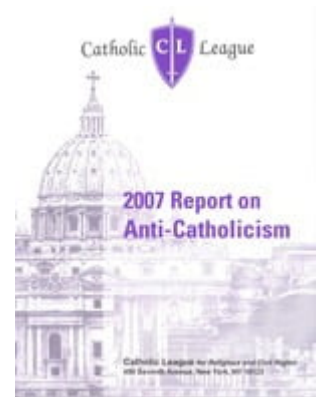


# Education



## January

**Fayetteville, AR** – A photo of an outhouse that looked somewhat like a church, with the caption “Jesus Saves! And this is where He does it,” appeared on a University of Arkansas Press brochure enclosure. The enclosure featured history textbooks, thus making the photo and caption uncalled-for and inappropriate.

## February 21

**Cleveland, GA** – A substitute teacher wiped the Ash Wednesday ashes off the forehead of a student at White County High School, then berated the girl and made derisive remarks about Catholicism when the girl and her classmates protested.

We wrote to Paul Shaw, superintendent of the county education board, wanting to know what disciplinary measures would be taken against the teacher. Shaw downplayed the incident, replying that the teacher “made an honest error in judgment” and that “a similar incident will not be repeated.” Donohue called Shaw’s response “beyond lame” and “morally reprehensible.”

We then contacted Kathy Cox, Georgia’s superintendent of schools, telling her that Shaw’s response was “totally unsatisfactory.” We cited Georgia’s Code of Ethics for Educators, which specifically bars teachers from harassing students on the basis of religion. Cox replied that she had no

legal authority to investigate the actions of a county superintendent such as Shaw.

The school board removed the teacher from the list of available substitutes in March, but for reasons having nothing to do with the Ash Wednesday incident. On April 26, we learned that the teacher's name had reappeared on the school system's substitute-teacher list.

## **February 22**

**Philadelphia, PA** – The mother of a 10-year-old boy who was not allowed to wear a Jesus costume at Willow Hill Elementary School's 2006 Halloween celebration filed a lawsuit on behalf of her son. Willow Hill required that students were to come dressed in costumes in order to participate in a school party. Although officials allowed other students to dress as witches and devils, the school's principal suggested that the boy identified himself as a Roman emperor, rather than Jesus.

## **March**

**Long Beach, CA** – A woman filed a federal lawsuit against California State University Long Beach after the school terminated her internship for sharing her Christian faith with co-workers during off-hours. The university tried to make her sign a document admitting she was unable to separate her religious beliefs from her role as an intern. She was released from the internship and threatened with expulsion from the school's graduate program after refusing to sign the document.

## **March 1**

**Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN** – The University of Minnesota's Department of Theatre, Arts and Dance hosted the Dario Fo play "The Pope and the Witch." The play involves a witch disguised as a nun who secretly arrives at the Vatican to cure an unnamed pope, who suffers from a "crucifixion stroke" that has left him paralyzed with his arms outstretched. Under the witch's control, the pope issues an encyclical approving illegal drugs and artificial birth control.

When a panel discussion on the play was scheduled in response to complaints, no Catholics were invited to join the forum. According to Dean Steven Rosenstone of the school's College of Liberal Arts, "nobody was selected for the panel on the basis of faith or religion." We wondered if the university would ever host an anti-Semitic play and if Jews would be excluded from a panel discussion on it.

## **March 2**

**Vancouver, WA** – Twelve students of Heritage High School were suspended for holding a morning prayer in the school cafeteria. The students, who normally prayed outside before school, were forced into the cafeteria before classes began due to inclement weather. The vice principal claimed that the prayer meeting would disrupt education and told them to pray outside. When they refused to do so they received the suspensions. A few weeks earlier they requested a room in the school to hold their meetings but were denied by the vice principal.

## **March 17**

**East Brunswick, NJ** – Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the East Brunswick school district asked the Third Circuit Court of Appeals to deny a football coach's motion to dismiss the school district's appeal of a lower court ruling. The lower court ruling allowed the football coach to 'take a knee' during a team prayer. The school district argued that "taking a knee" was a religious gesture. In 2006 Borden won a lawsuit that permitted him to "take a knee" or bow his head during the team prayer, which is led by the students.

## **March 24**

**Tiverton, RI** – Public schools superintendent William Rearick banned the Easter Bunny from a Saturday fundraiser and banned the word "Easter" from all school events. He told the *Providence Journal* that Easter themes might make non-Christians feel excluded.

Taking the Easter Bunny's place at the fundraiser was Peter Rabbit. In a March 23 statement, we jokingly noted that Peter Rabbit was a thief who stole from Mr. McGregor's garden, and that holding him up as a role model for youngsters sent the wrong signal. The league also noted that choosing Peter Rabbit smacked of sexism because his three sisters—Flopsy, Mopsy, and Cottontail—were passed over even though they had never committed a crime.

Our protest of the decision led to hundreds of letters flooding Rearick's e-mail inbox. It also led to national news coverage of the incident.

### **March 27**

**Columbus, OH** – An anonymous female journalism student wrote a column in The Lantern, a student newspaper at Ohio State University, titled "Going Down with the Catholics." She wrote that her Catholic friend Megan hasn't had vaginal sex with her boyfriend John, who "won't break up with Megan because he said it's the best head he's ever had in his life."

Penelope, the anonymous writer, continued, "Catholics can't do a lot of things: eat meat on Friday, listen to Marilyn Manson or vote Democrat, so pre-marital sex is just another item on the list. But when did God say it's OK to give a blow job so long as that's as far as you go?" She added, "Oral sex doesn't get women pregnant, only penetration does. (Unless you're Catholic, then Immaculate Conception does, too.)" She ended by writing, "Maybe God is looking down on the world smiling as He's getting oral pleasure guilt free, no strings attached."

We contacted Ohio State president Dr. Karen Holbrook, hoping that she would treat the matter with the same severity she addressed past racist incidents on campus. She acknowledged that the column was "offensive" but said it contained "the view of one student and in my opinion is not characteristic of the overall feelings and actions of Ohio State's student body."

## **April**

**Liverpool, NY** – A New York court reprimanded the Liverpool school district for preventing a fourth-grade girl from dispensing a flyer, which demonstrated her relationship with Jesus, to her fellow students. Her teacher denied her request to hand out the flyer because it had a religious connotation, therefore violating the school's policy on religious material. The court stated that it could not, "say the danger that children would misperceive the endorsement of religion is any greater than the danger that they would perceive a hostility toward religion as a result of the district's denial of her request to distribute the fliers."

## **April**

**Mount Washington, KY** – A middle school boy was not allowed to broadcast his book report on the Acts of the Apostles during the morning announcements. The principal said that the religiosity of the report might have overwhelmed the younger students of the middle school. The boy's mother stated that she felt, "Christian kids should be allowed to speak about their faith and not be ashamed."

## **April 19**

**Lake Bluff, IL** – A middle school teacher gave an assignment to her students pinpointing who was responsible for the Holocaust and listed Pope Pius XII along with Himmler and Goebbels. The Catholic League sent the teacher a copy of the league's reader on Pius XII as well as Rabbi David Dalin's *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*. We received a grateful reply from the teacher, who said she'd had no idea that Pius XII played an important role in undermining Hitler and rescuing Jews.

## **April 20**

**Chicago, IL** – University of Chicago law professor Geof Stone, commenting on the *Gonzales v. Carhart* case in which the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the partial-birth abortion ban, wrote, "Here is a painfully awkward observation: All five justices in the majority in *Gonzales* are Catholic. The four justices who

are either Protestant or Jewish all voted in accord with settled precedent. It is mortifying to have to point this out. But it is too obvious, and too telling, to ignore.” Stone’s remark appeared on the University of Chicago Law School faculty blog.

## **May**

**Wisconsin** – Two religious student groups, one of them Catholic, won religious-discrimination lawsuits against the University of Wisconsin. The Roman Catholic Foundation at the University of Wisconsin-Madison was awarded \$250,000 in student fees after a U.S. District Court judge ruled that the school had violated the group’s freedom of association rights; membership in the group is limited to Catholics. The University of Wisconsin-Superior agreed to pay \$20,000 in legal fees to the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship; the university had refused to recognize the organization because its leadership positions were reserved for Christians.

## **May 1**

**San Diego, CA** – The Thomas More Law Center sued the Poway Unified School District on behalf of a teacher who was ordered to take down several educational banners because they mentioned God. The banners, which the teacher had been putting up in his classroom for nearly 25 years without complaint, featured excerpts from the Declaration of Independence and popular patriotic songs.

## **May 16**

**Higley, AZ** – An honor student at Higley High School wondered why the word “God” was omitted from his biography in the school’s yearbook. In his biography he intended to thank all of those who helped with his success, specifically God. The student was later informed that “God” must be left out of the text due to concerns of separation of church and state. The Higley Unified School District later apologized.

## **May 18**

**Lakewood, CO** – Colorado Christian University was denied federal funding for students by a federal judge. The ruling upheld a state decision in 2004 that labeled the university as “pervasively sectarian.” The university claims that the denial of aid violates the U.S. Constitution’s guarantee to freedom of religion. The school appealed the decision because of “blatant religious discrimination.” The Department of Justice came to the defense of the university and stated that the Colorado Commission on Higher Education acted unconstitutionally in denying the funds.

## **May 22**

**Carbondale, IL** – Southern Illinois University announced that they would recognize the Christian Legal Society, a religious student organization. The university had denied recognizing the organization because in order to join the club, one must adhere to Christian beliefs. The university claimed this violated its affirmative action policy. The recognition came two years after the society sued the university, claiming the school’s decision to not recognize the club violated the rights to free speech and freedom of religion.

## **June**

**Pleasanton, KS** – A lawsuit between the Pleasanton School District and a student-based Christian club was settled. Under the settlement the Christian club was granted the same rights that other clubs received from the school, rights which they were previously denied. The Christian club received benefits such as broadcast announcements and use of school facilities at no charge.

## **June**

**Farmington, MI** – The Christian student group ALIVE filed a lawsuit against the Farmington Public School District because the district denied them the establishment of a Bible club. ALIVE sought to receive the same rights that other student organizations received such as announcements over the PA system and inclusion in the yearbook. The district said there

were no religious clubs in the district because of the policy on separation of church and state.

## **June 5**

***Dearborn, MI*** – The *Detroit News* reported that the University of Michigan-Dearborn planned to spend \$25,000 for footbaths, making it easier for Muslim students at the school to practice their religion. We wrote to all Michigan lawmakers, asking them if they would open to suggestions on how to better accommodate the religious needs of Christian students on campus.

State Sen. Gilda Z. Jacobs replied to Donohue and defended the footbath arrangement, comparing it to the rescheduling of Saturday exams for Jewish students and the closing of school on Christmas and Easter. The Catholic League responded by pointing out that the footbath arrangement constituted sponsorship of religion, while the other examples illustrate mere accommodation of it.

## **June 25**

***Columbus, OH*** – A federal judge ruled that employees whose religious beliefs conflict with the political positions of their labor unions cannot be forced to pay union dues. The ruling stemmed from a lawsuit by a Catholic schoolteacher, who refused to pay National Education Association dues because of the union's pro-abortion stance. The teacher sued Ohio's State Employment Relations Board after the board ruled that only members of religions with historically held objections to union membership, such as Seventh-Day Adventists and Mennonites, could be exempt from union dues. Federal judge Gregory Frost ruled that the board's regulation was discriminatory, in that it allowed members of some religions to opt out of union membership while denying that choice to followers of other faiths.

## **July**

***Chicago, IL*** – With the aid of the Thomas More Law Center, a



third grade boy was permitted to read his Bible while at school. The boy had been denied the right to read his Bible during his class' "reading time" at Elementary School District 159.

### **July 13**

**Broward County, FL** –A former Broward County College instructor won a religious discrimination lawsuit against the school. The instructor filed the lawsuit claiming that because he was Catholic, he was discriminated against when course assignments were made. The jury found that the Philosophy and Religion Department, where he was an instructor, favored evangelical Protestants in hiring, promoting, and course assignments.

### **August 7**

**Dallas, TX** – A proclaimed atheist filed a lawsuit challenging Texas' minute of silence, which had been in place in public schools for four years. The man claimed that the moment of silence was an attempt for the state to reintroduce prayer into public schools. The Texas law clearly states that during the silence, students may "reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity." He argued that the word pray showed that the state had religious intent, while the state claims that the moment of silence's purpose is secular.

### **December 13**

**Santa Ana, CA** – A high school student filed a lawsuit against a teacher for making anti-Christian remarks in class. The student claimed the teacher demeaned Christians and showed "a sense of hostility toward religion." The lawsuit claimed that the teacher said, "When you put on your Jesus glasses you can't see the truth." The lawsuit also claimed that the teacher said churchgoers are more likely to commit rape and murder and that religion is not connected with morality.