

# Education

## January



**Westfield, MA**—Students at Westfield High School who were suspended in December 2002 for distributing candy canes with messages attached filed suit in federal court claiming school administrators violated their constitutional rights to free speech and expression. The message with the candy canes explained the candy canes' shape and colors, and included Bible verses and a prayer to Jesus. The U.S. Department of Justice filed a friend-of-the-court brief on the students' side.

## January 23

**Grand Rapids, MI**—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was performed at the Spectrum Theater at Grand Rapids Community College. The play depicts Jesus having sex with the twelve apostles. The play is patently offensive to Christians

## February

**Ithaca, NY**—An anti-war poster at Cornell University read: "We Live In a Country Founded By Cheats, Murderers, Rapists, Thiefs [sic]...Terrorists. Whom [sic] Captured, Killed, Enslaved Millions of Africans. Whom [sic] Killed More Natives Than Nazis Did Jews. While the Catholic Church is Behind the Altar Justifying Molestation—God Bless Amerikkka."

## February

**Knoxville, TN**—Terrence McNally's play "Corpus Christi" was performed at the University of Tennessee's All Campus Theatre. The play depicts Jesus having sex with the twelve apostles. The play is patently offensive to Christians. In October 2002, the school suspended a fraternity for dressing in blackface at an off-campus social event.

## March

**Miami, FL**—The administration of Varela High School did not

allow the Choose Life Bible Club to have a picture in the yearbook because it said the picture would violate separation of church and state. The principal said the term "Choose Life" might offend students who support abortion. When threatened with a lawsuit, the school allowed the picture.

## **March**

**Pierre, SD**—Parents of Catholic school students in South Dakota were told the state would no longer provide busing for their children. Public schools that provided busing to parochial school students were told they could no longer do so and still be covered by insurance. Citing a South Dakota law and an attorney general's opinion from 1992, school authorities said they had no choice but to curtail service to Catholic students. In 1992, then-Attorney General Mark Barnett said that the South Dakota constitution does not permit funds for any sectarian or religious institution due to the 19th Century anti-Catholic Blaine Amendment aimed at prohibiting any funding for Catholic institutions. The state moved to enforce this provision, and the sitting Attorney General, Larry Long, backed the decision. Lawmakers, however, quickly came up with a compromise. Busing for parochial school students could be continued as long as the school districts do not spend any extra money as a result.

## **March 17**

**Oxford, MS**—The *Daily Mississippian*, the student newspaper of the University of Mississippi, published a cartoon by student Allan Innman that showed a bishop talking to a priest. The bishop asks, "What are you giving up for Lent?" The priest replies, "Molesting altar boys."

## **March 18**

**Westfield, MA**—U.S. District Judge Frank Freedman ruled that students at Westfield High School, who had distributed candy canes with religious messages and were suspended for it, were denied their right to free speech when school administrators sought to punish them for their expression.

## **April**

**Madison, WI**—At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Professor Benjamin Dykman was teaching a course on Abnormal Psychology. During a lecture he showed slides illustrating different abnormalities. As an example of a pedophile he showed a picture of a Catholic priest with a child.

## **April**

**Princeton, NJ**—The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University hosted "Ricanstructions," an art exhibit by Juan Sanchez. Included in the exhibit was a display called "Shackles of the AIDS Virus," a 1996 work by the artist that features such devotional items as scapulars and images of the Virgin Mary arranged in a circle. Another display showed naked female torsos arranged in the shape of a cross; it was labeled "Crucifixion No. 2." There was also a display of torn up images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Dean Ann-Marie Slaughter admitted that a display that offended Islam wouldn't be tolerated on the campus. But she still defended the anti-Catholic art for its alleged "educational value." A letter challenging the dean to debate the issue was never answered.

## **April 4**

**Columbia, MO**—Colin Wright, a student at Rock Bridge High School and "design editor" for the school newspaper, *The Rock*, wrote a column titled "Vatican City is somewhat similar to Iraq conflict." He stated that Iraq under Saddam Hussein and Vatican City "aren't so different." He wrote "Christianity has long been opposed to different religions...Christianity slaughtered men, women and children to further the domination of their religion"; "When Iraq attacked Kuwait...Saddam's goals were similar to the Pope's"; "It's not necessary to allow a despot absolute power over a people but be consistent. If President Bush thinks it pertinent to dethrone one dictator, it's necessary for him to dethrone them all, if he's a hypocrite."

## **April 8**

**Storrs, CT**—The University of Connecticut's newspaper, *The Daily Campus*, published an article by student Mike Kapralos, titled "Catholic Church a Mockery of the Ten Commandments." Kapralos detailed how he thinks the Church fails the Ten Commandments. Here are some examples. The Third Commandment, on the Sabbath: "the church does not really break, per se, but it definitely trivialize it [sic] with their 'Holy Days of Obligation.'... These are not days with any basis in the bible [sic]. I believe they are days artificially created through church-doctrine to raise more money and instill more guilt on the people who, because of other obligations, are unable to attend them."

On not having false gods: "I have seen many 'pagan-type' acts when I see pictures of the pope.... Every time, without fail, is [sic] some person genuflecting and/or kneeling.... This looks a tad to the untrained eye as idolatry, but according to Catholic dogma, it is acceptable."

On not stealing: "Every time you or your neighbor gives money into the church collection plate on Sunday, it goes to places you are unaware. Some may say this stealing [sic] by the church's upper hierarchy."

On not killing: "During World War II, Pope Pius XII largely ignored the plight of the Jews. He would and did not publicly decry the actions of the governments of Germany and Italy, both heavily Catholic countries. Most recently, Pope John Paul decried the war in Iraq as only a last resort...the pope is lying to the world and allowing the further murder of scored [sic] of innocent people and several genocides."

## **April 16**

**Williamstown, MA**—A Williams College student group, Voice for Choice, invited Frances Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice, to speak on campus during Holy Week. A letter pointing out Kissling's anti-Catholic bigotry was sent to the

college president, Morton Owen Schapiro. Schapiro was not asked to bar her from speaking but to speak out “to challenge what is incorrect and to denounce what is bigoted.” Schapiro responded that he agreed with this principle and that the “students and faculty would have no trouble making their feelings known.” He promised a “spirited exchange” in the school paper.

### **April 18**

**Lawrenceville, NJ**—The play “The Children of Fatima” opened on Good Friday at Rider University. Written by Rider faculty member Michael Friel, the plot revolves around a Catholic schoolboy in the 1960s who fears that the world will end when the pope reveals the third secret of Fatima. According to the *Princeton Packet*, a local newspaper, Friel admits that a friend of his called the play “Catholic bashing,” to which Friel replied, “I’m really going for the way that all institutions, whether it’s religion or government or even your parent, use fear to get what they want. By instilling fear in you, they can control you.” The play features a drunken Irish priest and a “hard-assed Sr. Regina Coeli.” Bart Luedeke, president of Rider, issued a statement distancing himself from the play and saying he was sorry that some found it offensive.

### **May 15**

**Cambridge, MA**—The MIT Community Players, sponsored by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, presented the play “The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told” by Paul Rudnick. The play, a gay retelling of the Bible, featured full male frontal nudity, filthy language, discussion of body parts, butch lesbians, effeminate gay men, ranting against nature, and damning God for AIDS.

### **May 30**

**Dover, PA**—Andy Apgar, a choral music teacher at Dover Intermediate School, led a chorus of school staff called “Rockin’ Sisters.” He and the others were dressed in drag as nuns.

## **June**

**Santa Rosa, CA**—On the website of Santa Rosa College was a listing for “Lutherans on Campus.” It contained the assertion that Martin Luther was a “recovering Catholic.” After the league wrote to President Robert Agrella, the offensive reference was removed, an apology was issued and school officials scheduled a meeting with the offending students.

## **June**

**New York, NY**—A professor at Hunter College who specializes in Catholic mysticism and psychology and received the highest recommendations from her department was denied tenure. In a Tenure Appeals Committee meeting, the professor was asked direct questions about her religious faith. It was later revealed that she is Jewish. The committee approved her for tenure, but she was subsequently refused by the full committee. This committee was not privy to the information about her faith.

## **June 4**

**Oshkosh, WI**—After threatening a lawsuit, a student at Winneconne High School was allowed to sing the song “He’s Always Been Faithful” at graduation ceremonies. She had initially been barred from singing it because it makes mention of God.

## **July 1**

**Pittsburgh, PA**—A U.S. District judge ordered a teacher’s aide to be allowed to return to work after being suspended without pay by the ARIN Intermediate Unit 28 for refusing to cover up or remove a 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch cross that she wore. The judge wrote that the agency’s policy was “overtly averse to religion.”

## **August 27**

**Egg Harbor, NJ**—The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of an elementary school that forbade a boy from giving out pencils with the message “Jesus loves the little children” with a heart symbol substituted for the word “love.” The

Rutherford Institute, which represents the boy, plans to appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court if necessary.

## **October 2**

**Topeka, KS**—Professors and students on the Washburn Campus Beautification Committee chose and displayed a piece of sculpture by Jerry Boyle called “Holier Than Thou.” It depicted a Catholic bishop wearing a hat that resembled a phallic symbol. The inscription on the base read: “The artist says, ‘I was brought up Catholic. I remember being 7 and going into the dark confessional booth for the first time. I knelt down, and my face was only inches from the thin screen that separated me and the one who had the power to condemn me for my evil ways. I was scared to death, for on the other side of that screen was the persona you see before you.’” The piece provoked protest from area Catholics, including Archbishop James Keleher of the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.

William Donohue wrote to university president Dr. Jerry B. Farley to take action, pointing out that he once rebuked a school newspaper editor for making disparaging remarks about nontraditional students. David Monical, Executive Director of Governmental and University Relations, replied that “No one involved...intended for any viewers to experience pain or hurt.”

## **October 25**

**Hanover, NH**—At the Columbia-Dartmouth football game at Dartmouth University, the announcer for the Columbia band uttered some disparaging remarks about the Terri Schiavo right-to-life case in Florida and about Jeb Bush. The announcer then introduced the Columbia half-time show by inviting the crowd to join the band in their “Celebration of partial-birth abortion”; this was followed by some ranting against the Pope and what the announcer described as his (the Pope’s) “drooling and stuttering” speech. This was the second year in a row that the Columbia band exploded in an anti-Catholic rant. Each year, the Catholic League received an “apology.”

## **November 13**

**Eau Claire, WI**—Aaron Brewster wrote an article in *The Spectator*, the newspaper of the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, called “‘Catholicism Wow!’ Vatican needs to modernize stance on issues.” The writer took issue with “the Vatican under the current fascist pope.” The issues he objected to were abortion, birth control, divorce etc., stating, “Another group that banned abortion and birth control was the Nazis.” The article ends with: “On a final note, the bread and wine do not actually turn into the body and the blood, or else people would be getting food poisoning from eating raw meat.”

## **December**

**Richland Center, WI**—A public school told its students to substitute “religious” words in Christmas songs with “secular” words for their concert. Any song mentioning Jesus or God was prohibited.

## **December**

**Cedar Springs, MI**—A public school removed all books dealing with the religious aspects of Christmas or Hanukkah from its library and placed them in an out of view area.

## **December**

**Dahlonega, GA**—A public school instructed its teachers that they could not read Christmas books in class, make Christmas decorations or use red and white candy canes because of their religious origin. Some teachers were told they could not wear Christmas-related attire.

## **December 8**

**Bloomington, IN**—Indiana University law professor Florence Roisman issued a complaint about a Christmas tree on campus. She said the 12-foot tree celebrated Christmas. Roisman, who is Jewish, stated, “To honor one religion and not honor others is exclusionary.” (The tree had no religious ornaments on it.) The dean of students, Tony Tarr, acceded to her demands and had the tree replaced by two smaller trees, along with a



sleigh stuffed with red and green poinsettia plants. He declared the first tree to be a “denominational” tree and the new ones to be “a normal Indiana scene.” Roisman objected to the new display as well.

### **December 11**

**Bethel, WA**—Mark Denison, music teacher at Clover Creek Elementary School, replaced the word “Christmas” with “winter” in Dale Wood’s “Carol From An Irish Cabin” at the school’s concert. The same concert included Hanukkah songs with lyrics about the “mighty miracle of Israel’s ancient days.” School officials said, that the teacher went too far in his decision, but left it in place. A spokesman said, “In the past there has been a lot of sensitivity to not giving preference to one religion over the other.”

### **December 12**

**Mount Pleasant, MI**—Central Michigan University’s affirmative action office published a calendar online that denoted various holidays. For December it listed Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Las Posadas. Next to Christmas was an asterisk that read, “Warning of Holiday Decorations.” The “Warning” pointed to a document titled “How to Celebrate Christmas Without Offense.” There were no asterisks next to the other three holidays. The document stated, “During the December Holiday season it is important to realize what may be offensive to others within a place of employment.... It is inappropriate to decorate things with Santa Claus or reindeer or other ‘Christmas’ decorations.... Good ideas for decorations during this time are snowflakes, snowpeople, poinsettias to give a feeling of the winter.” After protest by the Catholic League, the university removed the warnings. One of the top officials said the university had been unaware of the document.

### **December 12**

**Plano, TX**—A student at Thomas Elementary School was refused permission to hand out candy canes at a school party along with an explanatory booklet called “The Legend of the Candy

Cane.” Among other explanations, the booklet said that candy canes are hard because Jesus Christ is the “Rock of Ages.” School officials said district policy forbids students from handing out such materials.

#### **December 14**

**Medway, MA**—Memorial and Burke Elementary School canceled its holiday concert. Said Principal Scotti Finnegan, “Medway has become more diverse. One of the things we were finding is the holiday concert, as wonderful as it has been here at Memorial and Burke, the focus has really been Christmas.” No Christmas decorations were allowed in the school. Finnegan said that they would be “inappropriate,” excluding children who do not celebrate Christmas; and that “this is not always a happy time for kids.”

#### **December 14**

**Spring Hill, FL**—Powell Middle School did not allow Christmas trees or Santa Claus visits on campus. Principal Michael Ransaw said, “I just really don’t want to offend anyone. We have something for everyone. We don’t promote religion or the meaning of Christmas. We’re celebrating everyone.”

#### **December 15**

**Southfield, MI**—Adler Elementary School did not allow any Christmas decorations in the school. Principal Janet Jones stated, “We’ve never done Christmas trees and Santa Claus or anything because we want to be sensitive.” The holiday concert was of patriotic songs.

#### **December 18**

**Horsham, PA**—Karen Davis, principal of Dorothea Simmons Elementary School, removed a nativity scene placed in the school by parents, but left a menorah. “I felt that the nativity scene was definitely promoting Christianity,” she said. When asked why she allowed the menorah, which is a religious symbol, she replied, “Judaism is not just a religion, it’s a culture.” The Catholic League threatened a

lawsuit on the grounds of religious discrimination. Shortly after, Dr. William A. Lessa, Superintendent of Schools for the Hatboro-Horsham School District, ordered the nativity scene put back. He said, "To even begin to imply that the acknowledgment of a nativity is inappropriate doesn't sound right to me."