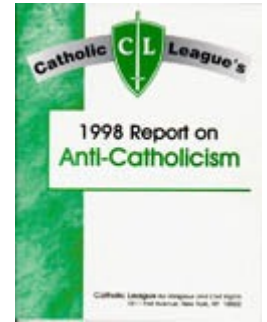


Executive Summary

When one thinks of activist organizations that are anti-Catholic, images of the Ku Klux Klan come to mind. But most of the bigotry that is heaped on the Church these days comes not from terrorists, but from well-respected men and women in establishment organizations.



Very few people, if polled, would think of the Ford Foundation as having any ax to grind against the Catholic Church. But it does. It continues to fund Catholics for a Free Choice, a group that is neither Catholic nor a proponent of freedom. It does so not simply because of its passion for abortion, but because of its interest in trying to manipulate public opinion against the Church's teaching on this subject.

Planned Parenthood and People for the American Way are two national organizations that only minimally hide their contempt for Catholicism. The former has a hard time opposing vouchers without taking slams at the Catholic Church (and what do vouchers have to do with planning family size?). The latter also succumbs to anti-Catholicism when it addresses the voucher issue, usually accomplishing this by citing the need for state encroachment on parochial schools. Even the National Council of Churches couldn't talk about freedom of choice in education without a bit of Catholic baiting.

The murders of the abortionist, Dr. Barnett Slepian, and the homosexual student from Wyoming, Matthew Shepard, were greeted with outrage by almost everyone, yet this wasn't good enough for many in the pro-abortion and pro-gay movements. They not only made sweeping statements against pro-life and pro-family causes, they went on to bash Catholics, and all Christians, in the meantime. That few in the abortion-rights or gay-rights camp chided their ideological kinfolk for such abuses was as disturbing as the bashing itself.

There is something perverse going on in the artistic community. Here we have clusters of men and women, some educated and some not, who maintain that it is a mark of their creativity that their depiction of Catholicism is not appreciated by Catholics. They defend their vile work by saying it is a new offering, a novel interpretation of Biblical sources. Their barely concealed hatred of the Catholic Church is not seen by them, or by art critics, as bigotry, but as, well, "art." But bigoted art is still art, and that is something that can't be said too often.

"Christ in New York" is the labor of Duane Michals. It is a photograph of a bearded man with a halo standing over a woman who is stretched out on a table, presumably following a self-induced abortion. His work, which was on display at the Ackland Art Museum, on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, is described as "a commentary on the inhumanity that persists as well as the violent consequences of religious hypocrisy." That the real inhumanity is the killing of innocent, unborn children, and that most total hypocrisy is illustrated by Michals and his ilk, is also something that can't be said enough.

For sheer sickness, it is hard to top the creativity of the Seattle-based artist, Leigh Thompson. In a junk-yard display of anger, Thompson painted a "smiling papal figure standing between two nuns. Each nun has her hand on the head of a male figure who is kneeling in front of the papal figure's crotch." That was how Michelle Malkin described "A Sex Act?" in the pages of the *Seattle Times*.

Here is what Malkin said of Thompson's second painting: "Hanging from a crudely designed crucifix made of intersecting penises is a Jesus Christ-like figure receiving oral sex from a veiled figure. Below the cross, two nuns lie on their backs with the ends of a coat hanger between their legs. Pages of the Bible are scrawled with the Satanic figure, 666." There was also a "painted depiction of a priest receiving oral sex

from a small child."

Thompson's work, which was on display at the Seattle Art/Not Terminal gallery in the spring of 1998, was taken to new heights with another creation. According to a Catholic League member who saw it, it "depicts Christ on the cross being sodomized by two men, anally and orally, genitals showing," etc. When we registered a complaint, Thompson responded by hanging my name in the window over his masterpieces.

"The Cardinal Detoxes," an anti-Catholic play by Thomas Disch, appeared in New York in 1990 and was brought back again in 1998. The cardinal is an alcoholic who runs down and kills a pregnant woman while driving drunk. In the play, the cardinal also attacks the Church for its teachings on women and sexuality and is ultimately poisoned by a monk when he confesses his plan to expose the problems of the Church. Just an ordinary play for 1998.

To show how ordinary "The Cardinal Detoxes" was, consider Richard Vetere's, "Holy Water," Christopher Durang's, "The Marriage of Bette and Boo," Paul Rudnick's, "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told," and Blair Fell's, "Burning Habits." Greater detail about each of these contributions to Catholic bashing can be found in the annual report, but suffice it to say that all of them were serious attempts to either paint the Church as evil or to deride the Church's teachings.

And, of course, there was that play-gone-bust, "Corpus Christi," by Terrence McNally. The Catholic League mounted its greatest protest of 1998 against this play, knowing what was at stake.

What was at stake was an attempt by a three-time Tony award winner to bring his hatred of Catholicism to Off-Broadway, and then, if he succeeded, to Broadway itself. Though some of the other plays were worse, "Corpus Christi" carried the greatest threat: if it went on without resistance, it would have sent a

green light to the theater crowd that they could continue with their hate speech with impunity. But instead, on opening night, theater-goers were greeted by more than 2,000 protesters, led by the Catholic League.

The failure of People for the American Way, led by its founder, Norman Lear, to mount a successful counter-protest to our effort was most gratifying. An embarrassingly small crowd of 300 gay and left activists is all that showed up on October 13, and they looked downright silly holding their little balloons while conducting their "Quiet March for the First Amendment." And when the lousy reviews of the play are factored in, the entire enterprise—from canceling the play, to reinstating it under pressure—was a major victory for the Catholic League and a sorry chapter for the anti-Catholic element in the theater community.

The business community is not unaffected by the virus of anti-Catholicism but it is usually easier to deal with it once a complaint has been lodged. That is one of the great things about a market economy: when appeals to common decency go unanswered, appeals to economic self-interest are always available.

We had a rather amazing confrontation with the *Village Voice* in 1998. It wasn't a challenge to one of the alternative newspaper's seedy graphics, or stories. No, it was a challenge that we made to their willingness to publish, in its classified section, an ad for a pair of vocalists that ended with the statement, "NO CHRISTIANS."

The ad gave me an idea: why not call the *Voice* and pretend that I wanted to hire a pair of vocalists for my band? I did just that, repeating the exact words in the ad, save for my own ending—"NO GAYS." The poor woman on the other end of the phone was so distraught that she put me on hold several times. When I told her that the *Voice* should accept my ad because the tabloid has no problem with sporting bigotry, she was

perplexed. When I then pointed out to her the “NO CHRISTIANS” ad, she nearly flipped. The story has a happy ending: the publisher extended an apology and a pledge not to run something like this again.

There was also a happy ending to an ad published by Absolut, the Swedish vodka maker, one part of which we found offensive. For the most part, the ad was actually a fairly cute story-book tale about a priest on an island. The Catholic references were all in good taste, except for one: we did not look kindly on speaking about the Eucharist as “everybody’s least favorite EASTER candy.” Our complaint was made and it was received with seriousness. The ad has been discontinued.

When we saw the panties with an image of Madonna and Child on front and back, we could hardly believe it. Who would do such a thing? Again, however, we found that when our complaint was pressed, a quick reversal took place. Wet Seal, Inc. operates several nationwide stores, and in some of them, the objectionable panties were being sold. But when the president of the company found out, she acted responsibly by having them withdrawn from all stores.

If there was one business company that we found to be obstinate, it was Levi Strauss. A big promoter of the radical gay agenda, the San Francisco-based manufacturer of jeans wanted to put a “Condom Christmas Tree” in Central Park on December 1, 1998, in celebration of World AIDS Day. But the tree was never erected—the Catholic League saw to that. Yet the root problem remains: Levi Strauss is infinitely more sensitive to the gay community than it is to the Catholic community. Indeed, it is downright insensitive to Catholics, and Christians, in general. Thus, we may not have seen the last of this battle.

It is harder to move the world of education than it is the world of business. When a problem occurs on campus, the mantra of academic freedom rings out; it is as though appeals to

academic responsibility are unfair.

On May 20, in my testimony before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in Washington, D.C., I offered many examples of how religious expression is treated as second-class speech in the public schools. It is a continuous problem, and it runs from the radical secularization of the sex education curriculum (complete with Catholic bashing when gay sex is addressed) to the sanitization of Christian symbolism every December.

To think that in the late 1990s we are still dealing with public school teachers who are being penalized for their Catholicism is shocking. But that is exactly what happened to Nina Bedford, an African American teacher in Kentucky. She was penalized because she serves as a board member of the Catholic Educational Endowment Foundation. Her sin? A conflict of interest. It was this that led to reprisals against her, including a shady committee decision not to promote her. Ms. Bedford is suing.

Usually, when there is a problem on campus involving anti-Catholicism, the president is not the issue. Not so at Muhlenberg, a Pennsylvania college that is affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church. The president, Dr. Arthur Taylor, not only defended an inflammatory artistic statement that was placed in the college's chapel, he lectured us about our complaint, saying that we were responsible for "bring[ing] the Catholic Church to a position which it held centuries ago." That his statement has an eerie ring to it is something he obviously doesn't get.

The most disgusting and anti-Catholic thing to happen on a college campus in 1998 was what appeared in the student newspaper, *Envoy*, of Hunter College. In addition to showing two pictures of a man putting a condom on his penis, there was an illustration of Christ on the cross with a condom on his erect penis.

It is hard to understand why someone would do this, but it was done—by a student—and it was accepted by the student editor of the newspaper. Though both subsequently apologized, the damage was done. And though Hunter's president, David Caputo, acted responsibly by issuing a strongly-worded condemnation of this, the fact remains that bigoted incidents of less gravity have led to the closing of entire campuses, when other segments of the population are involved.

If what happened at Hunter was the most disgusting, what happened at Syracuse University was perhaps the most fascistic. A Bible was burned on the campus in October, 1998, when Pat Buchanan spoke at Hendricks Chapel. That the press ignored this is unbelievable. Imagine the reaction if an Environmental Handbook, or Gay Manifesto, had been burned. What this proves is that a) book banning is back—on campus, no less b) it is acceptable to burn certain books and c) the book banners are emerging from the militant left (the latter is not a surprise as the extremists on both sides have long detested a search for the truth).

When government encroaches on religion, or when public officials show an animus against a particular religion, it raises serious questions about the status of freedom. Just as nefarious is the existence of a governmental double standard, as when the state treats with high scrutiny the affairs of one religion while ignoring similar practices committed by other religions.

In Maryland and Louisiana, we saw examples in 1998 of judges who sought to contravene the autonomy of parochial schools. In the spring, a County Circuit judge from Fredericks, Maryland, issued a preliminary injunction ordering a Catholic high school to allow two of its students, who had been expelled, to attend school pending a trial; the students had been expelled after being caught in a sexual encounter in a school hallway. Fortunately, when the case went before a U.S. District judge, the right of the school to expel the students was upheld.

In November, a local judge from Jefferson Parish in Louisiana overturned a decision by a Catholic high school to suspend two football players who had been charged with rape; the order not only forced the school to allow the students to go to class, it ruled that they must be allowed to play football. As it turned out, the students transferred to another school, making moot an appeal by the parochial school. But it just goes to show how willing some judges are to trespass on the autonomy of religious schools, throwing considerations of separation of church and state to the wind.

Contrary to what some critics of the Catholic League say, we do not involve ourselves in disputes about incidents which, though morally offensive, do not have an anti-Catholic element to them. For example, when we learned that the office of U.S. Patent and Trademark had an Office of Civil Rights, we simply smirked at the absurdity of it all (do they have their own office of Occupational Health and Safety?). Our smirk grew wider when we learned that there was also a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual subcommittee within the Civil Rights Office. To top it off, there was even the sponsorship of an annual Gay Awareness Month Celebration! While none of this mattered to us, what did get our attention was the citation of St. Paul as a gay man in the office's calendar.

After several phone calls requesting evidence of St. Paul's alleged homosexuality, we learned that there wasn't any. More important, the calendar would no longer post this "fact," and St. Paul had already been deleted from the internet listing that advertised the wondrous gay event.

The Clinton administration takes pride in boasting that it has employed more homosexuals and lesbians than any other administration. How it knows this raises some privacy issues that are best left alone, but in any event it is of no great interest to the Catholic League whether anyone in the administration is heterosexual (we are fairly well convinced that the president isn't gay). With this in mind, we treated

with aplomb the news that Clinton's choice for Ambassador to Luxembourg was a homosexual, James Hormel.

What we didn't treat as routine was the disclosure that Hormel had given his tacit endorsement to an anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (it is a San Francisco-based gay group that dresses as nuns, mocking Catholicism). Worse, when Senator Tim Hutchinson gave Hormel an opportunity to repudiate those who mock the Catholic Church, he declined to do so. So it was on this basis, Hormel's support for the antics of a Catholic-bashing group, that the league voiced its objections. As it turned out, Hormel never did get the job.

The emergence of Geoffrey Fieger as a candidate for Governor of Michigan gave the league pause, too. Fieger, who previously served as counsel to Dr. Kevorkian, had made a string of anti-Catholic statements that he, like Hormel, failed to repudiate when questioned. His narrow view of Catholic participation in public affairs dovetailed with his invective, leaving the Catholic League wary of his advance. But, like Hormel, Fieger's ambitions failed to materialize; he was roundly defeated by the incumbent, Governor John Engler.

Every election season we get hit with one more reminder that a double standard pervades worries over religious influence on the political process. To be blunt, when the non-Catholic clergy invade the political arena, few notice, but when Catholic clergy simply address public issues from the pulpit, the alarms go off. This is particularly obvious when black Protestant churches are turned over to office seekers and holders: everyone from the president on down seems to take turns addressing these congregations and few ministers resist what amounts to an open endorsement of a candidate. But let a Catholic priest discuss abortion, or implore the faithful to consider abortion in the calculus of their electoral choice, and immediately we hear about separation of church and state.

To cite one specific example, when President Clinton addressed

a black Protestant church on the Sunday before the November election, the *New York Times* mentioned what happened (it also listed other public officials who did the same thing). Then, on the same day, the *Times* did a story on the role of "The Churches" in the election, but cited only one example: John Cardinal O'Connor's homily that commented how those who are pro-life, including public office seekers, are treated in the media. This led the newspaper to inquire of the president of Planned Parenthood if he had any possible objections to the cardinal's talk (the answer is obvious), but it never provoked the reporter to even notice what was going on in Protestant churches.

In a volume such as this, we list offenses that stem from various sources and do not report on instances when no such offense took place. But it should be noted that with regard to the media, reporting from both electronic and print sources that covered the pope's visit to Cuba was quite fair. It is too bad that this level of fairness didn't carry over to stories of less gravity.

One of our most persistent complaints with the print media is the tendency to highlight the Catholic status of an offender (if it is relevant to the story, then there is no problem). Of particular note was the reporting of a case of involuntary manslaughter by a 17-year old girl, Audrey Iacona.

When stories ran of the conviction of Iacona for the death of her newborn baby boy, they almost all mentioned that she attended a Catholic school. Not only was this unnecessary (how many times is it cited that an offender attended a yeshiva, or a posh private school?), it was totally misleading: yes, at one time, Iacona attended a Catholic school, but she was now enrolled in a public school. Incredibly, not one newspaper managed to get all the facts correct and most left the impression that she was still in a Catholic school.

John Salvi, the deranged young Massachusetts man who went on a

killing spree at an abortion clinic at the end of 1994, is still being labeled a “devout Roman Catholic” by the news sources. That he was branded an “antiabortion zealot” and “madman” was entirely proper, but to lump all really devout Catholics with Salvi made no sense. Unless, of course, the purpose is to make a sweeping generalization of a negative kind.

“Former altar boy” is another tag that is commonly applied to Catholic men gone astray. Such was the case when the media reported on the trial of Christopher Vasquez, an accused murderer. His “former altar boy” status rarely went unreported, though there was nothing of any intrinsic value to this status (was he also a former stringer for the newspaper that cited this status?).

To gratuitously mention the Catholic status of an offender is to act as a red flag, but at least it has the virtue of not being an outright falsehood. Such is not the case with magazines that make specific, undocumented and wholly irresponsible charges. The trophy in this category for 1998 goes to *Time*.

There is a raging controversy over the role of Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust. On one side, we have those who blame him for his alleged “silence” during the genocide; on the other, we have those who, like the Catholic League, cite Pius for his role in saving some 860,000 Jews from Nazi persecutors. The former group comprises relatively few who maintain that the pope actually “collaborated” with the Nazis, but that is exactly what *Time* charged in its January 26 edition.

When we challenged *Time* for the evidence, we got a “we regret the error response.” What troubled us is that in the same letter we were also told that our letter would not be published. But this was no ordinary error and thus it cried out for a retraction, or at least publication of our letter, complete with an acknowledgment by the editors that they were

seriously wrong. After all, there is a huge difference between embellishing a story and printing out-and-out falsehoods of a perjurious nature. That is why we regard *Time's* unwillingness to print a retraction of this outrageous calumny as a contribution to Catholic bashing, all by itself.

There were no movies of any great notoriety that appeared in 1998 that were virulently anti-Catholic (some would argue that "Elizabeth" qualifies). And while this should be noted, it should also be said that there were any number of films that had anti-Catholic passages in them, many of which seemed to be thrown in with abandon and wholly without logic. Sinead O'Connor's foul-mouthed Blessed Virgin Mary role is a case in point.

If Hollywood was not a big problem, the same was not true of television. "South Park," "Comedy Central" and "Late Night with Conan O'Brien" offended Catholics so many times with their boorish quips that the league made it common practice to tape each episode. While some of the depictions were borderline, many others crossed the line in an unseemly manner.

The big TV story of 1998 for the Catholic League was the ABC bomb of a program, "Nothing Sacred." Though media critics often got it wrong, the league never insisted that the show was anti-Catholic, per se. No, what we said was that the show fed an ugly stereotype: Catholics loyal to the Church were cold-hearted dupes, if not phonies, while those in dissent were enlightened, caring and noble. In short, it was the sheer propaganda value of the show that we found disconcerting.

To our knowledge, never before has a TV show done so well with the critics and so poorly with the public than "Nothing Sacred." Not only did most critics rave about the show, it was given prominence in coverage the likes of which we have never seen before (not, at least, for a show that the public rejected).

ABC braved the ratings by moving the show from Thursday to Saturday, and then moved its time slot to accommodate the wishes of the producers and actors. And when shows with ratings that were better than "Nothing Sacred" were cut, and "Nothing" stayed, it was evident that politics, not ratings, were at work. The final irony came when critics blamed ABC for not standing by the show. Some had the audacity to say that the show suffered because ABC kept moving it in the lineup!

In the end, the Catholic League succeeded in killing most of the sponsors with its boycott. We have since been credited with conducting the first successful boycott of a TV show by means of our website.

A cheap, vulgar episode of "Ally McBeal" drew the ire of the Catholic League late in the year. The media covered the fight well and public pressure mounted on our side. The result is that we don't figure on having another battle with Fox over this show.

Finally, there was the most anti-Catholic show of the year, if not of all time: the April 7, 1998 episode of the short-run ABC program, "That's Life." More sacraments, traditions and teachings were cruelly mocked in this episode than could have happened by accident. From beginning to end, nothing was spared, even to the point of making fun of Christ's crucifixion. That it aired during Holy Week made the show all the more egregious.

So these are some of the highlights of this annual report. Inside the reader will find many detailed examples of anti-Catholicism. Some examples may strike the reader as not being cases of bigotry, while others will surely make him wince. Remember, we do not presuppose that everything that we find objectionable is the hand of a bigot. All we are saying is that Catholics who love their church have had to put up with too much lately and that the time has come to rise to its defense.

It is one thing to criticize the Church, quite another to subject it to relentless and mean-spirited assault. We recognize the legitimacy of the former and have said so often. We have even emphasized our preference for suffering the indignity of Catholic bashing over the "solution" of government censorship. But we are also quick to say that we have every First Amendment right to protest bigotry and have no intention of being intimidated by those who would censor us.

We hope you agree that the Catholic League has, at least for the most part, been prudential in its judgments and fair in its conclusions.

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President