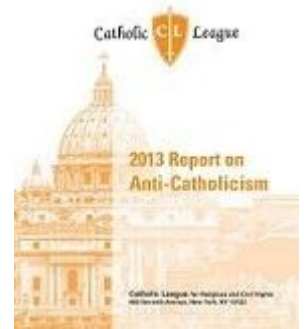


# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The biggest Catholic story of 2013 was seeing Pope Benedict XVI pass the baton to Pope Francis. Our new pontiff wasted no time becoming a media superstar, and by the year's end, he was on the cover of *Time* magazine, featured as the "Person of the Year."



The Holy Father's humility, and outreach to every segment of the population, touched people the world over. We moved quickly at the Catholic League to give him the kind of applause he deserved: we published a tribute to him on the op-ed page of the *New York Times*, just a month after his election.

Throughout the course of the year, we chronicled the pope's statements, and the reactions to them. While there was much to cheer about, there were more than a few commentators who sought to manipulate public opinion by offering their own politicized interpretations of what Francis said. In some quarters, the hyperventilation reached absurd levels: many pundits would have had us believe that he was going to turn the Church inside out.

In 2013, I decided to disclose how the IRS came after the Catholic League in 2008. No sooner had Senator Barack Obama become president when the IRS contacted me: we were being subjected to an investigation to see whether we had violated its strictures on political engagement. When it was all over, we were essentially told to be more careful; no penalties were levied.

For prudential reasons, I chose not to publicize the IRS probe until 2013. But when news reports emerged in the spring about the way the IRS was selectively targeting conservative organizations for scrutiny, I decided to tell our story. All I

had done to trigger the investigation was to issue news releases that were critical of candidate Obama, most of which had to do with his defense of selective infanticide and abortion-on-demand.

The defense of human life is the first civil right, and it is not one that I will ever shy away from. I also exposed the connection between Catholics United, a George Soros-funded phony Catholic group, and the IRS: it was they who were behind the probe. At the request of an outside lawyer, the IRS was contacted in 2013 asking for backup information regarding this episode, but it did not yield new information.

When government, especially the federal government, threatens civil liberties, it demands a strong pushback. The Health and Human Services (HHS) mandate, issued as an edict by Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, continued to enjoin the Catholic League, and others, in protesting its requirement that Catholic non-profits, as well as businesses owned by objecting parties, pay for abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization, and contraception in its insurance policies. The issue had not been decided by year's end.

Every time the Obama administration offered what it said was an accommodation, or compromise, we learned that it was mostly window dressing. Having a third party pay for what Catholic non-profits were still required to authorize was not sufficient; all we wanted was the status quo ante.

Having to pay for services deemed immoral was bad enough, but what was most objectionable about the HHS mandate was an abuse of power: the government decided to redefine what a Catholic organization was. For centuries, Catholic-run facilities proudly hired and served people of all faiths, never discriminating on the basis of religion. Now they were being punished for doing so.

To wit: the mandate said that any religious entity that hires

and serves mostly people of other religions is disqualified from the traditional religious exemption. The ruling is perverse. That is why we started a petition on our website; we sent tens of thousands of signatures to Secretary Sebelius, gathered over a period of just six weeks, asking her to rescind the mandate.

Violations of religious liberty in the armed forces occurred with regularity in 2013; our men and women in uniform were constantly being barred from exercising their constitutional rights. Accordingly, we supported the Military Religious Freedom Protection Act, a bill sponsored by Rep. Tim Huelskamp that would rectify this problem.

In the fall, we won an impressive victory for an Army soldier in Oklahoma: she had been told that she could not go to Mass on Sunday because she could not find another Catholic to go with her (they have a buddy system on the base at Fort Sill). We recommended that Army officials allow someone to escort her to Mass, and they acceded to our request.

When the federal government was partially shut down, the Obama administration retaliated by denying some Catholic priests from servicing Catholics in the armed forces. Priests who were contracted by the government to say Mass, for instance, were told that there weren't sufficient funds to pay them. So many volunteered. Diabolically, they were denied.

Friends of the administration, such as the ACLU, also sought to squash the religious liberty rights of Catholics. It sued the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for its pro-life policy. To be specific, in 2010, a Catholic hospital in Michigan tended to a non-Catholic woman who was pregnant, and who was having complications, but did not inform her of her option to abort her baby. So the ACLU decided to sue the USCCB, holding it responsible for the hospital's directives. In essence, the bishops were sued for their pro-life convictions.

One of the biggest issues we dealt with in 2013 was a bill sponsored by a California lawmaker that would lift the statute of limitations for one year on cases of the sexual abuse of minors, but would not apply to public institutions. Few on either side denied the obvious: the legislation was designed to “get the Catholic Church.” It was not drafted to stop sexual abuse, for if it were, it would have focused on the public schools.

We started pressing this issue in June, and in October, we won. Had it not been for Governor Jerry Brown’s veto—he proved to be courageous in the face of zealots—the Catholic Church in California would have been subjected to endless lawsuits, offering no justice to real victims. Besides, a bill that addressed this had already been passed in 2008, making moot the need for a new one. This was all about politics—the politics of bigotry.

The bishops held tough, especially its leader in this effort, Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez. We pulled out all the stops: I wrote a six-page letter to all the legislators and the governor. We also contacted over 1,000 parishes in California, and every one of our members in the state. We spoke to the media, and got our members nationwide to join the effort.

Any bill on the sexual abuse of minors that gave the public schools a pass could not be taken seriously. We detailed exactly what was going on in the schools, making it impossible for the bill’s supporters to claim ignorance. In his statement explaining his veto, Governor Brown cited the tragedy of abuse that had plagued Miramonte Elementary School in Los Angeles; I had written extensively on it in my letter to him and to the lawmakers.

We came to the defense of many priests and bishops who were being unfairly targeted, especially in Philadelphia, Newark, and St. Paul-Minneapolis. Msgr. William Lynn, who had been

unjustly imprisoned for 18 months on charges that he sanctioned the sexual abuse of a minor by a priest, had his conviction overturned at the end of the year. Archbishop John Myers of Newark, and Archbishop John Nienstedt of St. Paul and Minneapolis, were both the targets of activists bent on scoring points.

We had a very busy year on the nation's campuses. A faculty member at Florida Atlantic University asked students to write the name "Jesus" on a piece of paper, fold it up and stomp on it. When a student refused and protested to the professor's supervisor, he was suspended from class. I asked the professor why he didn't use "Obama" in place of "Jesus," but he did not reply. However, he was forced to apologize, and was placed on administrative leave for the rest of the semester.

A female student at Carnegie Mellon University was forced to apologize for her obscene and bigoted stunt. She decided it would be fun to dress as the pope at the annual school parade, going naked from the waist down. To top things off, she shaved her pubic hair in the shape of a cross. Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik was not too happy, and we expressed our outrage as well. Moreover, the president of the university didn't take kindly to her behavior. The student was hit with a misdemeanor by campus police.

A bid to censor the chaplain at the Newman Center at George Washington University failed, but not without a protest. Two gay students sought his ouster because he believes in the teachings of the Catholic Church. To be exact, the priest refused to give his blessings to their homosexual relationship. The attempt to muzzle his free speech, and to punish him for his exercise of religious liberty, did not succeed. The leadership of Washington Archbishop Donald Cardinal Wuerl, and our protest, proved determinative.

When a professor from the University of South Florida abused his academic freedom by insulting Catholics at an off-campus

event, we jumped on the issue. In a totally gratuitous, and downright obscene statement, the professor equated priests with feces. We moved with dispatch to contact academic and administrative officials at the university, as well as members of the Florida Board of Governors. We also gave it media publicity. The professor apologized and was reprimanded by his superiors.

To show that we don't overreact, we did not call for sanctions against the president of Ohio State University after it was disclosed that he made untoward comments about Catholics when discussing the University of Notre Dame with his athletic council. The remarks were made in jest. I appeared on "Good Morning America" to explain why not every comment of an arguably anti-Catholic nature is going to set off the alarms at the Catholic League. Political correctness is just as offensive when committed by those who normally object to its prevalence.

Colm Toibin's book, *The Testament of Mary*, became the subject of a Broadway play, opening at the Walter Kerr Theatre. It was not anti-Catholic, so we did not protest it, but we did draw attention to its decidedly biased theme. The Virgin Mary in Toibin's imagination was not the pious, obsequious mother of God. No, she was an independent-minded woman who said the crucifixion was "not worth it." But the public was not amused. The play was scheduled to run 12 weeks; it closed after two.

Smearing the clergy is nothing new, especially when it comes to those in the creative arts, but Alex Gibney took it to new heights in his documentary, "Mea Maxima Culpa." It debuted on HBO, and it not only portrayed Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) as a miscreant, it labeled him a "criminal" for his role in supposedly failing to discipline molesting priests. Laurie Goodstein, a reporter for the *New York Times*, showed her bias by signing on as a producer of this flick.

The movie says Cardinal Ratzinger covered up the deeds of

Father Lawrence Murphy, a Milwaukee priest who molested deaf boys in the 1950s. But no one contacted the authorities about Murphy until the mid-1970s (following a probe, the case was dropped), and it wasn't until 1996 that the Vatican was contacted. Instead of dropping an investigation—the statute of limitations had long expired—a trial was ordered. Ratzinger wasn't even at the trial, and indeed it wasn't until 2001 that he was asked to police these kinds of cases. When he was in command, he moved quickly and fairly to adjudicate these matters. In short, he was libeled.

Another politicized documentary, “How to Survive a Plague,” attempted to portray AIDS patients as victims of the Catholic Church. Based on a book by David France, the movie refused to hold those who chose to live a life of sexual recklessness accountable for their behavior. Predictably, it showed the Nazi-like behavior of ACT-UP—gay militants disrupting Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, spitting the Eucharist on the floor—in a sympathetic way. Michael Moore, a left-wing activist and producer, promoted ACT-UP's fascistic tactics as a legitimate response to oppression.

“Philomena” captured the attention of movie critics everywhere, touting it as the courageous story of a poor woman who had her baby stolen from her by nuns in Ireland in the 1950s; the cruel sisters then allegedly sold her son for a profit. In fact, the woman was pregnant out-of-wedlock, had no husband, was abandoned by her family, and was taken in by nuns to care for her and her baby. No one stole her child—Philomena put her son up for adoption when she was 22—and the nuns did not charge the American adoptive parents a dime. Moreover, scurrilous events were made up out of whole cloth, and attributed to nuns who could not possibly have been guilty; they were dead.

Critics of the Catholic Church embraced “Philomena” the way they did “The Magdalene Sisters,” another tale of woe that was based more on fiction than fact. I wrote a booklet, *Myths of*

*the Magdalene Laundries*, that was largely based on the McAleese Report, a study by the Irish government. In it, I examined the origins of the many myths that have surfaced about the laundries. Virtually all the horror stories that have been told—nuns cruelly torturing and sexually abusing “fallen women”—are lies. The booklet was widely distributed, and was not challenged by anyone.

Many late-night television hosts took unfair shots at the Catholic Church, continuing to feed the lie that most priests are abusers. We know that most of the abuse that took place—its heyday was the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s—was done by homosexuals, not pedophiles. Yet to simply cite this fact (the data are taken from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice reports on this subject) is to run the risk of being labeled a homophobe. Let me say it again: No, most homosexual priests are not molesters, but most of the molesters have been gay. The data are not debatable.

None of this matters to those who hate the Church, and no one in the entertainment industry hates Catholicism more than Bill Maher. The man is literally off-the-charts in his bigotry. Practically every week on his HBO show he made obscene cracks about the pope, bishops and priests.

Toward the end of the year, I enlisted the help of the bishops to press Time Warner, HBO’s parent company, to speak to Maher and get him to stop his anti-Catholic crusade. If anyone doubts there is anti-Catholicism in the U.S. today, let him name just one entertainer who comes even close to Maher in viciously smearing some other segment of society. It can’t be done.

On a more optimistic note, the proverbial “War on Christmas” showed signs of abating. It seems to have peaked in the middle-late part of the first decade of this century, and though it is hardly over, there are signs that Christians are more attentive to fighting these battles in their own



communities. At the national level, militant atheist organizations were still trashing Christmas, though some of their tactics made many secularists wince.

We proudly displayed our life-size nativity scene in Central Park, as we do every year. But in 2013, we did something different: we posted an enormous billboard in Times Square that read, "Send Modern-Day Scrooges a Message. *Celebrate the Prince of Peace*. Merry Christmas. Happy New Year."

To win the culture war is important to us, but to do it without a sense of humor is not the Catholic League way.