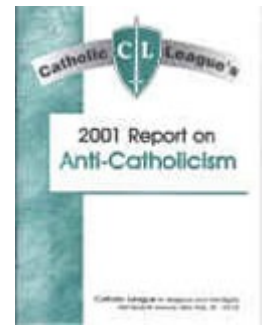


Executive Summary



Literally thousands of cases of anti-Catholicism come to the attention of the Catholic League every year. Our first job is to determine whether the alleged offense merits our scrutiny. If it does, then we must verify the authenticity of the offense to the best of our ability. If everything checks out, a strategy is outlined.

This section of our annual report provides a brief description of some of the worst offenses we encountered in 2001. As bad as they are, it could easily be argued that the more subtle and gratuitous expressions of anti-Catholicism (not listed here) are the most invidious. Cumulatively this may be so, but it remains true that those selected for this discussion are so egregious that they speak volumes all by themselves.

Perhaps the most vicious ad hominem attack on a deceased person we've ever seen appeared in the January 4-11, 2001 edition of Time Out New York. It libeled John Cardinal O'Connor, the much-loved Archbishop of New York who passed away in May 2001. In a discussion of the best and worst of 2000, the Gay & Lesbian section listed as its top entry the following:

Cardinal O'Connor kicks the bucket

The press eulogized him as a saint, when in fact, the pious creep was a stuck-in-the 1950s, antigay menace. Good riddance!

We extracted an apology from the magazine but the damage had

already been done.

On the June 30, 2001 televised version of the "Howard Stern Show," porn star Rebecca Lord stripped naked while condemning the Catholic Church for criticizing her profession. She was interrupted by Stern who exclaimed, "Catholic priests are having sex with young boys." He also said that those who work in the pornography industry are healthier than Catholic priests. In an angry voice, Stern added that Catholic priests show boys pornography so they can molest them. He was supported in his diatribe by his companion, Robin Quivers.

Our response was to ask every bishop in the U.S. to support a boycott of Miller Brewing Company, Stern's most prominent sponsor. Many bishops did, but no one pressed the issue more than Archbishop Rembert Weakland. The Milwaukee archbishop courageously confronted Miller officials in his own backyard.

The attacks on Christmas were worse in 2001 than in previous years, notwithstanding the alleged "bonding" that occurred following the events of 9-11. Here are just a few examples:

- In the Seattle area, King County Executive Ron Sims issued a memo mandating that county employees use "religion-neutral language" when referring to the holidays. He cited as an example, "Holiday Greetings." Following our protest, Sims withdrew his memo.
- In New York City, the principal at PS 22 ordered a Christian secular symbol, the Christmas tree, taken down and then asked teachers to bring Jewish and Muslim religious symbols to school. We won on this one, too, but not after we went public with our protest.
- Also in New York City, the attorney for the Schools Chancellor issued a memo saying it was permissible to display Jewish and Islamic religious symbols (the menorah and the crescent and star) in the schools but not a nativity scene. We lost on this one but are determined to fight it again in 2002.

- In Arizona, the attorney general defended a decision made by one of her lawyers that banned the display of Santa Claus in her office. In response, some Catholics displayed a holiday greeting featuring Bigfoot and the Loch Ness monster. While we didn't get the decision reversed, we certainly gave the attorney general a black eye in the public, as most people rallied to our side.
- Minnesota was a hotbed of political correctness: red poinsettias were banned from display in the county courthouse in St. Paul, and kids were prohibited from wearing red and green scarves in a middle-school play in Rochester.

One of the most bizarre and disturbing issues we dealt with all year occurred at Sharon High School in Sharon, Massachusetts. At its annual Halloween costume party, two boys dressed as pregnant nuns and a third as the impregnating priest. They won first prize. Granting the award was the faculty. Following complaints from the Catholic students in the mostly Jewish school, school officials confessed they were taken aback by what happened. They said they were particularly on alert this year to make sure that no Muslim students would be offended by any of the costumes. To correct the situation, the ADL was given permission to sensitize students to bigotry by discussing the Holocaust. That's right, what you just read actually happened.

The business world may not be as bad as education, but it is not immune to Catholic bashing, either. For example, Abercrombie & Fitch's catalogs not only feature naked men and women, they occasionally indulge in Catholic bashing as well. To cite an instance, the catalog entitled, A&F XXX Adventure: Get Wet Set & Go on Spring Break, featured questions posed to Catholic students that mocked priests and nuns. Customers were advised to "crash a Catholic Mass on Palm Sunday" and steal palm fronds. Regarding a cult movie, "Cemetery Man," readers were told to join in the fun by "learning to make wry comments

after bashing a dead nun's head to a pulp." This is their idea of humor.

Another stab at humor that bombed involved a Lipton ad in an alternative weekly New York newspaper. It showed a picture of a man waiting in line for Holy Communion holding a bowl of Lipton's onion dip. The priest was shown holding up the Host to the first person on line who was about to receive. The man, of course, was prepared to dunk the Host in the dip. In the corner of the ad was a picture of the Lipton "Recipe Secrets" that featured the onion dip. The good news is that the ad was pulled as soon as we protested. It was accompanied by a sincere apology from the top brass, which was much appreciated.

One decision we failed to reverse was made by the officials at Showtime, the cable channel owned by Viacom. They made a movie adaptation of "Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You" that aired May 27. The play was previously condemned by various Christian and Jewish groups for its overt anti-Catholicism. Producer Marshall Brickman justified the film's Catholic bashing by citing the Inquisition, the Crusades and the Holocaust. The fact that he was so openly bold about his comments demonstrates that there is no price to be paid in Hollywood for bashing Catholics.

The following three contributions from the artistic community offended many Catholics in 2001:

- The Brooklyn Museum of Art, known for its dung-laden portraits of Our Blessed Mother surrounded by pictures of female genitalia, struck again, this time with a statement by artist Renee Cox. She appeared in full-frontal nudity as Christ in the Last Supper. When asked why she did this she said the Catholic Church was to blame for slavery. She has previously portrayed Christ on the cross castrated; has appeared half-naked as the Virgin Mary; and has dressed as a nun with a naked woman kneeling before her in prayer.

- The Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, showed a photo collage by Alma Lopez that replaced the traditional image of Our Lady of Guadalupe with a woman in a rose petal bikini; a bare-breasted woman appeared below her as a cherub. Local Catholics, led by Archbishop Michael Sheehan, protested. As more people learned of the artwork, which was part of an exhibition that started February 25, the controversy picked up, especially in the spring. Parishioners from Our Lady of Guadalupe were the most vocal. The artist argued that she was being victimized because she was Mexican, yet failed to explain why most of her critics were also Mexican. Archbishop Sheehan was branded by Bill Tammus of the Kansas City Star as an example of an American Taliban.
- Florida Atlantic University, Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW), and the University of Northern Iowa hosted the Terrence McNally play, "Corpus Christi." The play depicts Christ having sex with the 12 apostles and has the Christ-figure exclaim, "F— your mother, F— your father, F— God." There is also a scene where one of the apostles asks the Christ-figure to perform fellatio on him.

Ted Turner has a record of offending Catholics. On Ash Wednesday, he did so again. After spotting some CNN workers in the Washington office with ashes on their foreheads, he commented, "What are you? A bunch of Jesus freaks? You ought to be working for Fox." We protested and Turner apologized—just as he has before—which means he never learns from his mistakes.

It is sometimes true that what appears to be an offending source is actually innocent of wrongdoing. eBay, the online auction website, is a perfect example. It's a huge operation and no one can reasonably screen every single item posted for sale. Consider the following items that were offered in 2001, all of which were quickly withdrawn by responsible eBay

officials:

- A “Virgin Mary Immaculate Conception Condom” that had a picture of the Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus. The tag line read, “If you conceive, its [sic] a miracle.” On the back was a picture of Pope John Paul II. “It also includes inside the flap,” said the description of the condom, “instructios [sic] on how to put on the condom (drawings!) showing a certain someone on a cross with a woody and a glove...”
- A “Weird Tattooed Jesus Statue!” that depicted Jesus with three eyes, vampire teeth and a dagger tattoo on his chest. The base was covered with roses and green painted skulls.
- An Open Wound CD by The Grey Wolves titled, “Catholic Priests F— Children,” had a sketch of naked boys and girls on the cover and a picture of a Catholic priest.

How many of these incidents—and all the others that are included in our 2001 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism—were the result of ignorance, and how many were a function of malice, is not easy to say. To be sure, as even these few examples indicate, many were done intentionally as a “payback.” Catholic misdeeds, real and imagined, are routinely invoked as justification for bigotry. Indeed, when offenders run out of words to explain their behavior, they often reply, “Remember Galileo.” I have found the best response is simply to say, “Sorry, never met the guy.”

As noted, some of the decisions we protested were reversed. Apologies were extended in other cases and offensive items were withdrawn from the marketplace. In no instance did we call for censorship. Unfortunately, our opposition to a lawsuit against the Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne decision to host “Corpus Christi” was seen by many area Christians as “selling out.” What they failed to understand is that the right remedy matters: moral suasion may work; gag rules do not.

Some readers will disagree or quibble about the inclusion of certain entries. We listen carefully to those who respectfully disagree with us and take their views seriously. There is, of course, no bigotry meter we can use that objectively selects what constitutes anti-Catholicism. But it would be a mistake to say that what is included here represents everything that has come to our attention. It would be equally wrong to assume that we randomly chose what to enter. Having said that, we stand by our findings and submit them to you for examination.

William A. Donohue

President