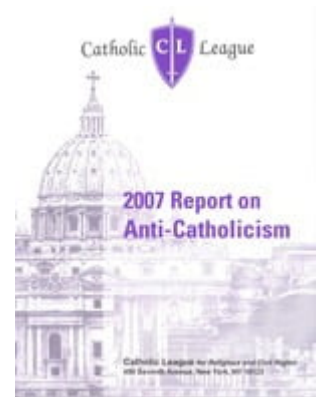


Executive Summary



We've had big years before, but never have we had more blockbuster victories than in 2007. And never before were we engaged in so many different types of controversies; the range of issues was truly impressive.

We usually don't get involved in issues that don't have an anti-Catholic element to them, leaving it to other activist groups to take on those matters. But after years of the Catholic Church being singled out for special retribution because of a small number of miscreant priests, our lid blew when we learned in January that Hollywood was trying to peddle a soft-child porn movie at the Sundance Film Festival. The film, "Hounddog," featured 12-year-old Dakota Fanning playing a sexually promiscuous girl who is violently raped on the screen.

To demonstrate the utter hypocrisy at work, we decided to do more than protest; we decided to see whether the federal statutes on child pornography had been violated. So we asked the Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section within the U.S. Department of Justice's Criminal Division to investigate the matter. We were delighted to learn that the case was turned over to the FBI. We were just as happy to learn that because of our efforts, no distributor decided to touch this movie with a ten-foot pole.

More in our ballpark was the display of anti-Catholic posters

on a billboard along Interstate 65 in Jeffersonville, Indiana, near the Indiana-Kentucky border. The posters featured anti-Catholic comments, courtesy of the Eternal Gospel Church, a breakaway sect of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. When we found out which billboard company allowed the bigoted remarks to be posted—CBS Outdoor—we decided to ask if we could post a statement of our own. It agreed. Well, almost.

After being nothing but cooperative, an official at CBS Outdoor got cold feet when we told him the content of our sign (we never indicated that we were upset with the Eternal Gospel poster). We wanted to post a billboard in the same area that said, “CBS Sponsors Anti-Catholicism.” When told that our request was denied, we issued a news release listing the e-mail address of the CEO of CBS Outdoor. They got the message and took down the anti-Catholic posters.

A much more serious issue occurred when we learned that presidential hopeful John Edwards had hired two women known for their anti-Catholic writings. Amanda Marcotte was hired as Blogmaster and Melissa McEwan was selected as the Netroots Coordinator. We managed to force the two of them out the door, but it wasn’t easy.

Marcotte had said things like, “the Pope’s gotta tell women who give birth to stillborns that their babies are cast into Satan’s maw,” and “the Catholic Church is not about to let something like compassion for girls get in the way of using the state as an instrument of force women to bear more tithing Catholics.” She was also capable of getting into the gutter: She asked, “What if Mary had taken Plan B after [here she described the Virgin Birth in vulgar terms],” to which she offered the reply, “You’d have to justify your misogyny with another ancient mythology.”

In her writings, McEwan had lashed out at the pope, Christians in general, and used vulgarities to trash the Catholic Church. “What don’t you lousy [expletive] understand about keeping

your nose out of our britches, our beds, and our families?" She also used obscenities to describe herself.

Our first response was to say that "John Edwards is a decent man who has had his campaign tarnished by two anti-Catholic vulgar trash-talking bigots. He has no choice but to fire them immediately." Edwards did just that. But then he rehired them. We then threw down the gantlet.

We contacted the *New York Times* and reserved a space on the op-ed page to run an ad on February 16. Titled, "Presidents' Day Message: Courtesy of John Edwards," it detailed some of the vile remarks made by Marcotte and McEwan. Then we hit a roadblock: the *Times* refused to print the vulgarities. So we resubmitted the ad leaving a blank space in the deleted area; we also mentioned that the newspaper wouldn't print what the two women had written, but that interested readers could go to the Catholic League website to see what they said. Within minutes, we were told that the *Times* would run the ad as originally submitted.

Alas, the ad never appeared. That's because the two foul-mouthed bigots were forced to quit just before the ad was about to run.

One of the biggest scams we've ever encountered surfaced when "Titanic" director James Cameron teamed up with TV-director Simcha Jacobovici to release a film claiming to have evidence of Jesus' tomb; they said they had found the remains of Jesus and his family.

Our first reaction was "here we go again." That's because not a Lenten season goes by without some author, reporter or TV producer trying to cast doubt on the biblical account of Jesus. Our suspicions were confirmed when we quickly learned that Israeli archeologist Amos Kloner was in charge of the 1980 investigation of the tomb that Cameron-Jacobovici seized 27 years later to make their allegations. Kloner immediately

said that their claims were completely bogus.

Other experts, like Rockefeller University archeologist Joe Zias, bluntly said that “Simcha has no credibility whatsoever.” To top it off, an Israel Antiquities Authority committee unanimously condemned the preposterous claim as a modern-day forgery. But it took a wave of media coverage, featuring the Catholic League’s input, before Cameron and company were discredited.

The Easter season proved to be a busy time for the Catholic League. During the first week of April, the Roger Smith Lab Gallery at the Roger Smith Hotel in New York City was set to display a 6-foot tall anatomically correct sculpture of Jesus in milk chocolate; the figure was depicted as crucified. But thanks to the Catholic League, the figure never saw the light of day.

When we learned that the “Chocolate Jesus” was to be displayed during Holy Week—at street level where children would have easy access—we hit the media with press releases galore. We also contacted some 500 organizations, representing a wide range of religious and secular institutions, to join with us in our protest. What pushed the exhibit over the top was the announcement that the public would actually be invited to take a bite of the sculpture.

It didn’t take long before a wave of public support for the Catholic League’s protest emerged. When I debated the artist, Cosimo Cavallaro, on radio and TV, I realized that his idea of art was nothing short of bizarre. He confessed that not only does he work with chocolate, he uses feces. When asked where he gets the feces, he said he uses his own.

Needless to say, the more the public learned of this exhibit, the more pressure was brought to bear on the hotel to cancel it. It did just that. As a coda to this story, it should be noted that when the same artist displayed his same work at the

end of the year, the Catholic League did not complain. Why? Because it was shown at some second-rate gallery in New York and didn't occur during a sacred time in the Church's calendar. We also knew that Cavallaro wanted us to take the bait and give him plenty of free advertisement, so we decided to disappoint him.

Of all the TV shows in 2007 that gave air to relentless Catholic bashing, none approached the ABC program, "The View." Rosie O'Donnell and Joy Behar, two angry ex-Catholics turned anti-Catholic, found it near impossible to discuss any subject that touched on Catholicism without going off the rails. They not only showed how utterly uninformed they are about their former religion, they showed how coarse and intolerant they are.

Things got so bad by the spring that we decided to launch a salvo of our own. Our target—Barbara Walters. Walters, to be fair, did not make anti-Catholic remarks on "The View," but because she was co-producer and co-owner of the show, she was in a position to get the panelists to zip it. She obviously didn't think this was her job. But when she read our ad on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* on June 12—detailing 15 incidents of Catholic bashing since Labor Day of the year before—it struck a chord. And that's because we made her the subject of our ad, "What's Happened to Barbara Walters?" She got the message: we didn't hear an anti-Catholic peep out of the panelists for the rest of the year.

Fodor's travel guides are known by millions as the premier reference source for tourists. Well-written and well-researched, they are a handy tool to have when traveling. Unfortunately, many of the guide books, especially those that cover countries with big Catholic populations, are laced with snide and wholly gratuitous slaps at Catholicism. No other religion is treated with such disrespect.

We decided to register a protest with the top brass

at *Fodor's*. What we got was a wholly professional response: the anti-Catholic remarks were acknowledged as such and a pledge to remove them from further printings was given. End of story.

We occasionally work with other organizations which share our values, even when there is no palpably anti-Catholic issue in play. So when I was asked by Beth Gilinsky, a friend and ally in the culture wars, to join with her group, the Jewish Action Alliance, to protest the Khalil Gibran International Academy in New York City, we looked into the issue and decided to get on board. What was at stake was the establishment of a publicly funded "Arabic-themed" school in New York City.

We wanted to know whether this was really an "Arabic" school or an Islamist school. We wanted to know why the woman who was named principal was an activist. We wanted to know why radical imams were listed on the school's advisory board. We wanted to know what the curriculum was. We wanted to know why there is money in New York for this kind of school but not a dime for vouchers. And at every turn, we were stonewalled by the Department of Education. Hence, our willingness to join with our Jewish friends in opposing the school.

Our interest peaked when it was reported that the principal refused to condemn pro-terrorist T-shirts that her friends were hawking. On the front of the shirts it said, "NYC Intifada"; the term Intifada has been used to describe Palestinian terrorist attacks on Israeli Jews. After much controversy, the principal was forced to resign and reassurances were given that the school would not become a hotbed of radicalism.

From September through December, the Catholic League took on many issues, but none were more important than our twin boycotts: Miller beer and "The Golden Compass." We won on both issues, but not without a struggle.

About a week before San Francisco's Folsom Street Fair took place on September 30, 2007, we learned that the gay S&M event was using a poster of half-naked men and women dressed in leather mocking the Last Supper. We also found out that the Miller Brewing Company was sponsoring the fair. Ergo, we asked for an apology and for Miller to pull its logo from the poster. After some initial resistance, we got what we wanted and considered this chapter closed. But we were wrong.

We soon found out that an anti-Catholic group, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence—gay men dressed in habit—was to receive some of the proceeds from this event. So we asked for Miller to dissociate itself from the street fair. It refused. At that, we announced the start of a nationwide boycott of Miller beer.

Things worsened when we learned that at the fair, religious objects such as crucifixes were sold as sex toys. Moreover, a man dressed as Jesus, and a woman dressed as a stripper, were hoisted in cages above a Catholic church at the Sunday event. There was more. Incredibly, men had sex with each other in the street, masturbated in public and were whipped with chains in front of men, women and children. The police were under orders to arrest no one. They dutifully complied.

We decided to hit Miller on another front: we launched a PR campaign sending pictures of the depraved men to every Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim cleric in Milwaukee (home of Miller Brewing); secular institutions also received the mind-boggling pictures.

It took about six weeks before we got what we wanted: an apology for the anti-Catholic antics of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence; an apology for the sacred symbols sold as sex toys; and an apology for the man and woman hoisted in cages above the church. Thus did we squeeze a total of four apologies from Miller (the first being for the poster).

What made the boycott work was people like Mike Setto, a Chaldean beer and liquor store owner from Michigan. He, and others in the Chaldean community, refused to stock Miller beer, causing consternation at Miller headquarters. And the PR campaign embarrassed the brewer to no end—pictures don't lie. Yet without the support of Chaldean Bishop Ibrahim N. Ibrahim and Milwaukee Archbishop Timothy Dolan, the campaign against Miller would not have worked. They were both fantastic.

We closed the year with a successful boycott against "The Golden Compass." From the beginning, our goal was to see to it that the film did not meet box office expectations, thus making it unlikely that there would be movies made of the second and third volumes of Philip Pullman's trilogy, *His Dark Materials*. As it turned out, we crushed their numbers at the box office, throwing mud on the idea that future films based on Pullman's work would be made.

The movie was never our central concern. Rather, it was the likelihood that unsuspecting Christian parents might be encouraged to buy the Pullman books as Christmas presents if their children liked the movie. After all, the producers and screenwriter openly admitted that they were watering down the most anti-Catholic elements of Pullman's work. But as we said over and over again, the movie was bait for the books, and it was our judgment that most Christian parents would not want to introduce their children to the wonders of atheism and the horrors of Christianity, especially Roman Catholicism. At Christmastime, no less.

In other words, our mission was to give parents a big FYI, a sort of consumers alert—*caveat emptor*—so that they could make an informed decision. To that end, we published a booklet on "The Golden Compass" that unmasked Pullman's agenda. We simply quoted what his friends and foes had to say about his writings, offering proof of his anti-Catholicism. Most significantly, we printed exactly what Pullman had to say about the subject, e.g., "I'm trying to undermine the basis of

Christian belief.”

Perhaps the most revealing comments came from American Atheists and England’s National Secular Society: they blasted Pullman for giving his blessings to a movie adaptation of his book that didn’t sock it to the Catholic Church. I congratulated the leaders of both organizations on television for being honest bigots. And they certainly helped to make our point about the anti-Catholic nature of Pullman’s books, however unwittingly.

One more item. On April 5, 2007, policy analyst John Hogan came into my office to tell me that “South Park” made a cartoon character of me on an Easter show that aired the night before. Stunned, I accessed the show and found that my character—which did resemble me—was depicted chastising Pope Benedict XVI as being “too soft.” The show then had me ordering the arrest of both the pope and Jesus. After Jesus was killed by one of the show’s regulars, Kyle, he resurrects and kills me.

When asked about this on TV, I took it in stride wondering why anyone would really think I would be upset; some in the media wanted to know if I would sue Comedy Central. After all, I reasoned, this was the cartoon version of being lampooned, and to make anything more of it would smack of humorless. That was not my style. Indeed, I got a kick out of it.

So it was a huge year for the Catholic League. It most certainly will be one that those doing research on bigotry will find incredibly rich for many years to come.