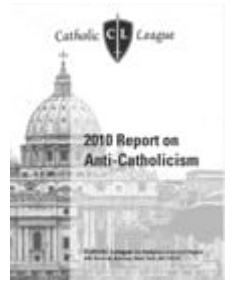


Executive Summary

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Anyone who seeks to have an impact on the culture is bound to be controversial: it comes with the territory. Moreover, this is not a job for wimps. Judging from the reactions that were garnered in 2010, it is safe to say we made our mark. To be exact, we ignited more than one firestorm, drawing much praise and much criticism along the way. The following is a summary of the highlights of the year.

After a fairly routine first couple of months, we were provoked into action following several weeks of stories in the *New York Times* that attempted to blame Pope Benedict XVI for the sexual abuse scandal. Though it did not succeed in bringing him down, the timing and the coordination of effort that was evident suggested that more was in play than mere reporting.

Lest anyone have any doubts about where I stand on the matter of priestly sexual abuse, I staked out a position early on when news of the scandal first hit the front pages of the *Boston Globe* in 2002. At that time, I was accurately quoted in the *New York Times* saying, "I will not defend the indefensible." Nothing has changed since. Never will the Catholic League defend a priest who is guilty of wrongdoing, sexual or otherwise. But I hasten to add that we will always defend those who are unfairly charged with misconduct. Indeed, we will always defend the rights of priests when they are accused.

There were several reasons why we reacted favorably to the

media in 2002, and unfavorably in 2010: in 2002, news stories about priestly sexual abuse were largely fair in their coverage; in 2010, we were treated not to new cases of abuse—the problem is nearly non-existent these days—we were bombarded with stories about decades-old cases. More than that, many of them were unfair in their accusations, never mind the invidious innuendos that colored much of the coverage. What bothered us immensely was that no other institution, secular or religious, was put under the microscope about cases of alleged wrongdoing that took place over a half-century ago.

The timing of the *New York Times* stories was also suspect: it came right after the health care debate that had absorbed the media for several months came to an end. Was this just an accident? No, they were ready to fire as soon as the coast was clear. Who are the “they”? Laurie Goodstein of the *New York Times* was fed much of her story by Jeffrey Anderson, the most notorious steeple-chasing attorney in the U.S.

The tens of millions Anderson has made shaking down the Catholic Church have largely come from obtaining priest personnel files from decades ago. Anderson is also a donor to SNAP, the professional victims’ group; he writes them a check, and they generate publicity. In this instance, SNAP officials just happened to be in Rome right after President Barack Obama signed the health care bill; they were ready to be shown on TV once Goodstein pulled the trigger with the latest files obtained by Anderson. Just like a well-oiled machine, out came old dirt about the Church.

We decided to do something about this outrageously orchestrated news story. What motivated us to take out an op-ed page ad in the *New York Times* was the extent to which the newspaper tried to trace old cases of alleged abuse to the Vatican. Before Joseph Ratzinger became pope, he had almost nothing to do with policing instances of sexual abuse, yet the *Times* tried to convince readers that in his role as the

theological right-hand man to Pope John Paul II, he was somehow responsible for what happened. Not until the last few years of John Paul's tenure did Cardinal Ratzinger have any say over these matters, and the record shows that he acted with dispatch once given the reins.

Our summer was particularly hot in New York in 2010, and not just in terms of the heat index. Things reached the boiling point when we staged a huge street demonstration against Anthony Malkin, owner of the Empire State Building, for disrespecting Mother Teresa. Over 3,000 Catholics turned out to protest Malkin's decision not to afford the saintly nun the same kind of honor he has bestowed on everyone from the Ninja Turtles to the Communist Chinese government. All we petitioned him to do was to light the towers in blue and white on the night of her centenary, August 26. We did everything right by the numbers, but he decided not to give her the respect she richly deserved.

It was a great night. The speakers represented the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities, drawing on Irish, Italian, African American, Latino and Albanian backgrounds, as well as representatives from other ethnic groups. Not in attendance, but who were surely with us in spirit, were the millions of people all over the world who sang the praises of Mother Teresa on her special day. The words of encouragement we received, from cardinals and bishops in the U.S., as well as in India, meant a lot to us. Many of them also wrote to Malkin, expressing their displeasure with his obstinacy. At the end of the day, Mother Teresa was honored, if not by the Empire State Building, then just about everywhere else. Malkin was the big loser.

We just didn't complain and stage a protest—we helped to raise money for the Missionaries of Charity. Moreover, we also drew attention to the many causes Mother Teresa championed. Furthermore, we won the plaudits of politicians in both the Republican and Democratic parties. Just as impressive, we

inspired many public figures around the nation to light their municipal buildings in blue and white; the lighting ceremonies extended to Europe.

Would Mother Teresa have wanted all this attention? No. But then again, she never sought the limelight in the first place. However, the mission of the Catholic League—to stand up for the rights of Catholics—argues persuasively for a more public response.

Right after Thanksgiving, we braced ourselves for another round of the Christmas wars. Fortunately, we were ready. What we didn't expect was that the atheist community would hit as hard as it did, and in so many cities. When American Atheists paid for a huge billboard on the New Jersey side of the Lincoln Tunnel saying Christmas is a myth, it struck many New Yorkers as obscene. One of the aggrieved, an elderly gentleman from Manhattan, came to us pledging to underwrite an appropriate response. I came up with an idea—to emphasize the reality of Jesus—and we arranged to have a huge billboard displayed on the New York side of the Lincoln Tunnel. Checkmate!

We also did something never done before: we sent, free of charge, a beautiful manger scene to every governor, asking that it be placed in a suitable public place. Many complied, thus triggering another round of hate mail from the so-called "freethinkers." We paid for it because we didn't want to give anyone an excuse not to display a crèche on public property at Christmastime. In addition, the Catholic League erected its own nativity scene, a life-size one, in Central Park; this year's crèche was brand new.

What we didn't expect to happen immediately after Thanksgiving was a collision between the Catholic League and the Smithsonian. After Brent Bozell's Media Research Center exposed that the storied Washington museum was housing an exhibition featuring ants crawling all over Jesus on the

Cross, we issued a news release announcing we were contacting every member of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees asking them to review the propriety of using federal funds to pay for the Smithsonian. The result: within hours of our news release, Smithsonian officials pulled the video from the exhibition, sending shock waves through the artistic community.

Though we never demanded the video be pulled, we were accused of censorship anyway. Besides, even if we wanted it censored, we don't have censorial powers: that belongs to government. Yes, Rep. John Boehner and Rep. Eric Cantor spoke up saying they would look into this matter, but no one asked, or in any way threatened, to close down the gay-themed exhibition, much less shut down the museum.

Our position was quite simple: if it is wrong for the government to fund religious expression, it should be equally wrong for the government to fund anti-religious expression. In a nation that is 80 percent Christian, it is obscene, to say the least, to ask the taxpayers to fund a museum that features anti-Christian fare while receiving 70 percent of its money from the public.

The attacks we received for standing up to the Smithsonian were among the most voluminous, and vicious, that we have received in some time. Evidently, many artists have no religious affiliation, save for a dogmatic attachment to their work; they cannot countenance criticism from religious-minded persons. Their arrogance is appalling: they are the only segment of American society that believes it has an absolute lien on the public purse, yet rejects even the notion of public accountability. Well, they lost this round.

It wasn't just in Washington where we did battle with the art mavens—we were busy in the fall drawing attention to the scurrilous "artwork" of Stanford professor Enrique Chagoya that was on display at the Loveland Museum in Loveland,

Colorado. It showed a man performing oral sex on Jesus. After we gave this anti-Catholic exhibition national attention, a female truck driver from Montana ended the controversy by taking a crowbar to the Plexiglas case that housed it. No matter, as usual, the artistic community feigned victim status, never once even hinting at the fact that what they were defending was hate speech. Their narcissism is incredible.

Fighting with our cultural adversaries is nothing new, but when we lock horns with government officials, that is something more troubling. Government is not supposed to be hostile to religion, but often is. And because it holds the ultimate authority, infringements on religious liberty by its agents are all the more disconcerting.

There was a time not long ago when the term "health care bill" meant legislation designed to save lives. Today, it may also mean death. To wit: the health care bill that President Barack Obama ultimately signed contained provisions that allow for federal funding of abortion.

The Catholic League was proud to stand with the bishops. Our bishops, led by Francis Cardinal George, with the assistance of Justin Cardinal Rigali and Bishop William Murphy, did everything they could to delete the abortion-funding provisions from the bill, and they may have succeeded had Sister Carol Keehan of the Catholic Health Association not undercut them by publicly proclaiming that the bill was just fine. By claiming that the bill did not fund abortions, she gave cover to a piece of legislation that even some of its supporters admitted otherwise.

The bishops were also rightfully concerned that conscience clause protections might be jeopardized under all the health care changes that were proposed. The fact that at this late date in American history we have to worry about this fundamental religious liberty—not to be forced by the

government to participate in acts that violate our conscience on matters of life and death—is a sad commentary on the state of our First Amendment rights. In the end, our side prevailed.

One of the reasons why the Catholic hierarchy had just concerns about religious liberty issues had to do with the nominations and appointments made by the president. One in particular proved to be critical: the nomination of Dawn Johnsen to head the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel. After her nomination went nowhere in Obama's first year, it was reintroduced in 2010. This immediately set off the alarms at the Catholic League. Why? Because in the late 1980s, Johnsen worked on a brief that sought to deny the Catholic Church its tax-exempt status. Given her cast of mind, we felt it only right to alert every Senator of her track record. On April 9, having run up against a brick wall, she withdrew her name.

The firing of a Catholic professor from a state university for the crime of explaining the Catholic perspective on sexuality, after being asked to do so, was one of the more Orwellian events of the year. The fact that the professor, Ken Howell, succeeded in getting his part-time job back from the University of Illinois (following a lengthy investigation), is cause for rejoice, but the fact that he had to fight this battle at all is distressing. While the Catholic League did not represent him, we alerted him to several pro-bono lawyers and helped to generate much publicity about his plight.

Celebrities are good at Catholic bashing, and 2010 saw no shortage of them. Sarah Silverman, Lindsay Lohan, Elton John, Jay Leno, Lady Gaga, Louis C.K., Matt Damon and Joy Behar topped the list; Leno and Behar being serial offenders. While we have no problem with many Catholic jokes, we do take exception when celebrities cross the line and/or hurl invectives with a palpable meanness. We are also struck by the duplicity of giving some groups a pass, e.g., Muslims, while relentlessly dumping on Catholics.

Talking about Muslims, we couldn't help but notice the rank hypocrisy of the *Washington Post*. It refused to run a cartoon that might offend Muslims. Did the cartoon make a mess out of Muhammad? No. It never even depicted him. The cartoon showed children and animals roving about, and at the bottom it questioned, "Where's Muhammad?" The *Post*, which had just recently published a clearly anti-Catholic cartoon, had the audacity to say that it didn't want to provoke anyone by running the cartoon. Not only that, the same newspaper accused the Catholic League of censorship for simply exercising our First Amendment right to free speech by protesting the Smithsonian video.

There is obviously a double standard, something we have pointed out over and over again. But in addition to African Americans, homosexuals, Jews, Latinos and others, we can add Muslims to the protected classes. Indeed, they have now vaulted right to the top of the list.

We wish there were signs that our culture were turning around, but we don't see any. Assaults on Catholicism, if not Catholics, are running at a fever pitch. It is our job to confront those responsible. We do so by putting the media spotlight on them, protesting in the streets, alerting our membership base, etc. While dialogue is not to be discouraged, anyone who thinks that talk alone can resolve issues grounded in deep-seated hostilities is delusional. Sometimes it takes a confrontation.

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President