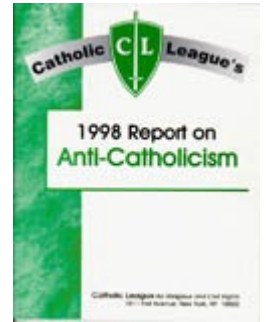


Government

January



Washington, DC – Members of Congress received a letter from the league opposing the nomination of James Hormel as U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg. The league's objections were based on Mr. Hormel's tacit endorsement, during the 1996 San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Parade, of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence—a group of gay men in nuns' habits who have been mocking the Church for years. When invited by Sen. Tim Hutchinson of Arkansas to repudiate the antics of this group, nominee Hormel failed to do so.

March

Frederick County, MD – Frederick County Circuit Court Judge Mary Ann Stepler issued a preliminary injunction ordering St. John's Literary Institution, a Catholic high school, to reinstate two students who had been expelled for a sexual encounter in a school hallway. The students' parents had sued the school and Judge Stepler, apparently unconcerned about separation of church and state, mandated that the students be allowed to continue attending the school pending the outcome of the lawsuit. Fortunately, when the school appealed, a U.S. District Court judge overturned the injunction, upholding the school's right to expel the students.

March 18

Albany, GA – An instructor licensed by the state of Georgia to conduct its required course in Professional Ethics for

licensed insurance agents used the course to offer a biased, totally one-sided view of the Protestant Reformation. The instructor demeaned Catholicism, leading Catholic students to protest.

April

Providence, RI – A bill was introduced in the Rhode Island state legislature that would force priests to break the seal of confession in cases of child abuse or neglect. The legislation would amend the “Privileged Communications to Clergymen” law which stipulates that religious officials cannot be forced to reveal the contents of private conversations without the other person’s consent. A spokesman for the Diocese of Rhode Island warned that this bill does not distinguish between a priest who gives advice and one who hears a confession.

June

Washington, DC – The Civil Rights Office of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office included St. Paul in a listing of homosexuals on fliers publicizing its First Annual Gay Awareness Month Celebration. Asked by the league for the source by which St. Paul was so identified, the Patent and Trademark Office—after several days of delay—finally identified its sources as “the internet” and several unnamed books. Acknowledging that all information on the internet is not necessarily reliable, a government spokesman assured the league that St. Paul’s name had already been deleted from the electronic version of the flier, and would not again appear in print.

July 17

Hempstead, NY – A New York State employee charged that she was subjected to a slur against Irish-Catholics by an administrative judge. The woman reported to the league and to state authorities that while she and several other employees

watched a video of Irish step dancing during their lunch hour, the judge entered the room, saw what they were watching, and commented, "Those Irish Catholics are stupid." When she challenged him, she reported, he repeated the comment twice more, as well as "other cruelties" that she said she was too upset to remember verbatim. An investigation by state authorities has been ongoing.

August

Raleigh, NC – The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, an arm of the United States government, sought to intervene to dictate the personnel practices of the Diocese of Raleigh. Ignoring separation of church and state, the EEOC ordered the diocese to rehire Joyce Austin, whom the diocese had fired as its director of music ministry. The EEOC also mandated that all diocesan employees undergo training in Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The diocese refused to cooperate, insisting that the EEOC had no authority to make such a ruling.

September 24

Mesa Verde National Park, CO – A national park ranger, explaining the transformation of the Pueblo Indian culture from matriarchal to patriarchal, attributed it to the incursion of Europeans in the 1540s. In trying to "do away with their culture and assimilate them into the Spanish society," the ranger declared, the Europeans communicated to the natives that "you're Catholic or you're dead."

October 4

Queens, NY – U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato, running for re-election, gave a highly partisan speech from the pulpit of Rev. Floyd Flake's AME Church. Rev. Flake, a former Congressman, also made partisan political remarks, and promised that he would soon issue an endorsement of either Sen. D'Amato or his opponent, Rep. Charles Schumer (Flake ultimately endorsed D'Amato). There was no outcry about

separation of church and state, no saber-rattling about the church's tax exempt status—as there is whenever a Catholic religious leader even dares to touch upon a public policy issue.

November

Salem, OR – The Oregon Office of Public Instruction ignored repeated calls by the league to investigate a Halloween incident in which faculty and staff at Tillamook High School ridiculed the Catholic Church. Dressed as a priest and nuns (in full habit complete with huge rosary beads), faculty and staff were pictured in a local newspaper pointing large rulers at a student who crouched before them. The league demanded that separation of church and state—which make it impermissible for real priests and nuns to wear their religious garb into a public school in order to promote the Catholic faith—be applied equally to those public school employees who wear Catholic religious garb into their school in order to ridicule the Church. After the Oregon Office of Public Instruction repeatedly failed to respond to this matter, the league took its complaint to the U.S. Department of Education.

November 2

President Clinton and New York Congressman Charles Schumer, at the time a candidate for the United States Senate, gave highly partisan political speeches in Protestant churches just two days before the election—and no outcries of separation of church and state were heard.

November 7

Marrero, LA – After Archbishop Shaw High School suspended two students who had been arrested for attempted rape, a Louisiana district court judge issued a temporary restraining order against the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Archbishop Shaw High School and its principal, Father Richard Rosin. In a flagrant

violation of the principle of separation of church and state, Judge Robert A. Pitre not only blocked the Catholic school from suspending the students, but also mandated that they be permitted to continue playing on Archbishop Shaw's football team. The two students subsequently transferred out of the school voluntarily, leaving the judge's violation of church-state separation unresolved legally.

November 30

Pittsfield, MA – The city Parks Commission denied permission for a private citizen to erect a 3-by-5-foot crèche in Common Park, a public park which is open to displays by private citizens. Two weeks later, apparently realizing that this decision was in violation of Supreme Court rulings protecting private religious expression in such public settings, the commission reversed itself and allowed the crèche to be displayed.

December

Cortland Manor, NY – The Cortland Community Center, whose holiday display included a religious symbol, a menorah, along with such secular symbols as a Christmas tree and Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus, at first rejected a request to add a nativity scene. However, after the league explained that it is legally permissible, the Community Center agreed to permit a crèche to be displayed.

December

Las Vegas, NV – McCarran Airport continued its holiday tradition of displaying a menorah, while refusing to allow space for a privately sponsored nativity scene.

December

San Diego, CA – The San Diego Metropolitan Development Board (MTDB) ordered the removal of Christmas ads which had been

placed on its buses by the Mission Valley Christian Fellowship. The ads, which read, "A gift to die for. Jesus did" and "The gift that keeps on forgiving. Jesus" were deemed in conflict with an MTDB policy which bars advertisements that "might be offensive to any religious, ethnic, racial, or political group." Following a letter to the MTDB from the league's San Diego chapter, and an address at an MTDB meeting by Mission Valley Christian Fellowship senior pastor Leo Giovinetti, the MTDB voted 14-0 to restore the ads and revisit their advertisement policy.

December

Nyack, NY – The village of Nyack's official newsletter, in an article on the "Common Thread" running through the December holidays, described the spiritual significance attributed to Kwanzaa and Hanukkah. The description of Christmas, however, focused on brightly lit Christmas trees and candles in windows—with no mention of its spiritual basis. The newsletter's December calendar also illustrated the start of Hanukkah with a religious symbol—the Star of David—while Christmas