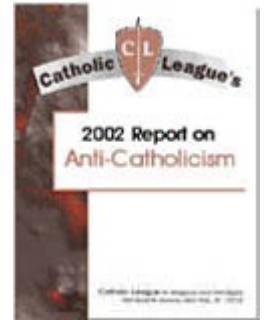


Government

January 9

Omaha, NE – On the opening day of the Nebraska legislative session, state senator Ernie Chambers distributed a packet of unusual Rosary beads to his colleagues. All of them had the crucifix chopped off. Chambers justified his decision to disfigure the Catholic devotional object by arguing that people of many religious beliefs find peace in what he termed the “counting beads.”



February 1

Albany, NY – New York attorney general Eliot Spitzer subpoenaed the records of pro-life crisis pregnancy centers in New York State. Spitzer demanded the centers divulge the names of all staff members and their credentials, as well as the training materials, policies and procedures used to counsel pregnant women. Spitzer claimed the moves were the result of complaints about misleading advertising and inappropriate medical counseling at the centers.

The Catholic League joined many others, including state attorneys general, in protesting Spitzer’s decision because we saw it as a thinly veiled strike at Catholicism; it is no secret that Catholics run many of the crisis pregnancy centers in New York. William Donohue wrote to the New York State Legislature asking it to put pressure on Spitzer. There was a strong response from several legislators. On March 1, Spitzer withdrew the subpoenas.

February 5

San Francisco, CA – San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown attended an arts fundraiser dressed as a Catholic priest. The Yerba Buena Center for the Arts held the “Come as You Aren’t Party.” When asked about the priest costume Brown said, “Why not? I talk to God regularly. I get down on my knees and I pray and I pray—then God comes to me and says, ‘Yes, Mr. Willie?’”

February 5

Albany, NY – The New York State Senate approved a bill requiring all health insurers to cover contraceptives. It made an exception for religious institutions in which most of the employees, and most of the people they serve, share that religion. However, most Catholic institutions such as schools, hospitals and social service agencies serve people who are not Catholic. In addition, many employees are not Catholic. But these institutions are still Catholic agencies, and it is not the business of the state to decide whether these places are sufficiently Catholic.

February 7

Oklahoma City, OK – A training seminar conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services featured a presentation by speaker Michael McEwen. McEwen opened the seminar by telling an offensive joke about a Catholic priest who consumes alcohol and has sexual relations. An attendee at the seminar complained and, after getting no satisfaction, enlisted the help of the Catholic League. An official with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health eventually apologized and assured the complainant and the league that it would not happen again.

March 8

Boston, MA – Massachusetts Attorney General Thomas Reilly proposed a plan to deal with the problem of child molestation by priests in the Boston Archdiocese. He proposed to involve his office in the recruitment, selection, training and monitoring of priests. After concerns about the violation of the separation of church and state were heard from many quarters, including the Catholic League, Reilly backed off his plan.

April 24

Philadelphia, PA – Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham announced plans to convene a grand jury to investigate allegations of sexual abuse by priests in Philadelphia. She

said the grand jury will investigate “all allegations involving priests whether they are dead, dismissed or retired.” The Catholic League registered its objection on the basis that no other religious group or social agency was included in the investigation. This smacked of a witch hunt of Catholic clergy.

May 8

Hartford, CT – The Connecticut state legislature considered a bill that would require clergy in the state to report any allegation of sexual abuse to the authorities. As part of the bill, Catholic priests would have been required to report such allegations, even if they learned of them in the confessional. The house of representatives passed the bill 144-2. State senator John McKinney noted anti-Catholic comments during the debate. The state senate inserted an exemption for the confessional. Some senators noted that without an exemption, the state was forcing priests to choose between the free exercise of their religion and the law. The house eventually went along and the bill passed with the exemption.

March 9

Pensacola, FL – A Federal Court ruled that the Florida Department of Corrections had the right to deny inmates Holy Communion in the form of wine. The court ruled the wine was not an essential part of the religious practice. A U.S. Court of Appeals reversed the decision saying the prison system should have to show how the dispensing of the wine would impede prison management.

June 26

San Francisco, CA – The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals’ three-member panel ruled that reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools is unconstitutional due to the phrase “under God.” The Catholic League immediately issued a news release condemning the ruling and calling on teachers in the 9th Circuit jurisdiction to continue to recite the pledge in an act of civil disobedience. Following nationwide

condemnation, the judge who wrote the opinion stayed his own ruling until the full court could consider the case.

July

Until late July, on the website of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) under the “links of interest” page, the category “Catholic” only listed Catholics For a Free Choice. After this was mentioned by columnist Mark Shields as his “Outrage of the Week” on the CNN show “Capital Gang,” another link was added, catholic-usa.com, which is a directory of Catholic sites (it does not include CFFC). On July 31 Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to DNC chairman Terry McAuliffe imploring him to “act quickly and decisively to remove” the link to CFFC. The Catholic League then mounted an ad and writing campaign to draw attention to the DNC’s association with this patently anti-Catholic group.

August 6

New York, NY – Judge Luther Dye of the New York Supreme Court refused to approve the release of money from a trust to the mother of a student in order to pay the student’s tuition at a Catholic high school. Off the record, the judge chided the student for wanting to attend a Catholic school because of the recent scandals, saying he wouldn’t want to give the Church any money. He said he would release the money if she wanted to use it for something different. The New York State Commission on Judicial Conduct said it would investigate.

August 29

Omaha, NE – The Suburban Rotary Club of Omaha invited state senator Ernie Chambers of Nebraska to speak to the club. Chambers, well known for anti-Catholic utterances, attacked the Catholic Church in his speech saying, “The Catholic Church is more effective as a criminal enterprise than the mafia.” An Associated Press story on the address described the Rotarians as “unfazed” by Chambers’ remarks.

September

The Catholic League continued its campaign against the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and its association with Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC). With no response from the DNC, the league published ads in the Catholic newspapers *National Catholic Register*, *Our Sunday Visitor* and *The Wanderer* as well as in the Washington, DC publication *Roll Call*.

September

Fall River, MA – Bristol County District Attorney Paul F. Walsh, Jr. released the names of 20 Catholic priests accused of sexual misconduct in complaints to the Diocese of Fall River. Most of the cases were too old to prosecute. Walsh admitted that his decision would be criticized, but said he did it because he was angry at the way diocesan officials had handled the matter.

The Catholic League objected because the names of other clergy from other religions were not included. If others were, then there would be no objection. As it stood, only Catholic clergy were included, as if they had a monopoly on the problem.

October

Manchester, NH – New Hampshire attorney Mark A. Abramson went to court seeking all Catholic clergy personnel and probation files, archives and complaints of sexual abuse made in the Diocese of Manchester. He did not release the names. This led diocesan lawyers to file a motion forcing release of the names. No other clergy from any other religious groups were sought.

October

The Catholic League continued its campaign against the Democratic National Committee (DNC). The DNC received a flood of letters, faxes and emails from Catholics, including Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the US Bishop's Conference. The DNC added several other groups to the Catholic listing including Call to Action. During the weekend of October 26,

the links section of the DNC website was rearranged. Catholic was removed and the former entries were placed under "Religious Affiliated." CFFC was taken off. After a press release from the Catholic League noting this, the CFFC link was put back on the DNC site.

October 3

Irmo, SC – The Irmo Chapin Recreation Commission voted 3-1 to ban religious displays at a holiday lights event at Saluda Shoals Park. Three commissioners voted for the ban, and a fourth voted against it because he wanted no holiday displays at all. The commission said it followed the advice of legal counsel, which said the display of a nativity scene would prompt a lawsuit.

November

Mineola, NY – In April, Nassau County lawmakers passed a law requiring the clergy to report cases of abuse. It did not require teachers, abortion providers, school coaches, et al. to do the same. District Attorney Denis Dillon recommended a bill that would mandate all professionals to report cases of sexual abuse.

Judy Jacobs, Presiding Officer of the Nassau legislature, said Dillon's interest in mandating that abortion providers be required to report cases of sexual abuse "crossed the line between his personal beliefs and upholding the law." In response, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to Nassau lawmakers saying that Jacobs' remark "comes dangerously close to suggesting that Dillon's Catholicism is getting in the way of his professional duties." Afterwards, Jacobs criticized Dillon again, saying his antiabortion position accounts for his interest in this bill. She then said, "If he hasn't crossed the line, he's come dangerously close."

November 29

Delmar, NY – The Bethlehem Public Library had a Hanukkah display by a local Jewish group of a menorah. It included a

brochure on the holiday and a brochure on how and when to light the Sabbath candle. The other display was a Christmas tree with mice ornaments. There was no crèche. When a resident asked to include a crèche, she was told that nothing could be done about the situation that year.

November 30

Portland, ME – A menorah was erected in Ganley Plaza in front of City Hall. The city manager, Joseph Gray, originally banned all holiday displays in front of City Hall except a lighted tree, but allowed the menorah for this year. A crèche could only be displayed in other public parks.

December 4

Birmingham, MI – A menorah was erected for the first time in Shain Park. The Christmas display consisted of a Santa Claus house and Christmas tree. In 1986, the 6th U.S. Circuit Court ordered a crèche in the park taken down because it was not adorned by secular symbols. Mayor Seth Chafetz said of the menorah, "We're a city that's now known for its tolerance and diversity. This addition brings a good balance to the Santa house, the lights and the tree."

December 5

Chicago, IL – John Kass, columnist for the *Chicago Tribune*, reported that Westmont police ticketed a woman because she had a rosary hanging behind her rear-view mirror. She was to pay a \$75 fine. A judge dismissed the case.

December 9

New York, NY – The Thomas More Center for Law and Justice filed a lawsuit against the Department of Education of the City of New York. It charged that the city discriminates against Christian students because it allows the display of a Jewish menorah and an Islamic crescent and star in schools but does not allow a Christian nativity scene. The Catholic League was instrumental in bringing the suit.

December 13

Newark Valley, NY – The village board of trustees rejected a proposal to display a crèche on the village green. The petition for the crèche was signed by 600 residents. It was voted down unanimously by the four-member board and Mayor Sandra Downs.

December 20

Murfreesboro, TN – A firefighter was ordered to take down a sign he placed on the lawn outside his firehouse. City officials objected to the word “God” in his “God Bless America” tribute to the firefighters of 9-11 who lost their lives.

December 30

Albany, NY – The Catholic Bishops of New York State filed a lawsuit against New York State challenging a law that requires religious institutions to provide prescription contraception coverage to employees. The New York State legislature had already passed the mandatory contraception law that would force the Church to violate its own teachings, ignoring the bishops’ calls for exemptions for religious institutions.