

L.A. company apologizes to Catholics for accepting anti-Catholic billboards

A Los Angeles company which owns thousands of outdoor advertising billboards in southern California has apologized to area Catholics for carrying anti-Catholic advertising sponsored by a breakaway group of Seventh Day Adventists.

Tod Tamberg, editor of *The Tidings*, the colorful weekly of the Los Angeles Archdiocese, thanked the *Catholic League Newsletter* for bringing the story to his attention. He sent along a copy of the letter of apology from John C. Martin, CEO of Gannett Outdoor of Southern California, owner of the billboards on which the ads appeared.

The *League Newsletter* (July-August issue) published a photo of the offending billboard taken by California Executive Director Ted Mayer and included member reports of similar billboards in other locales across the country.

The Tidings article generated calls and letters to the company which in turn led to the apology.

Yet another letter of apology, this one addressed to Cardinal Roger Mahony, came from Bjarne Christensen, President of the Southern California Conference of Seventh Day Adventists. He noted that the leader of Barn Ministries, the group placing the billboards, had been "disfellowshipped from our denomination."

Officials at Gannett promised to be more vigilant in the future in screening out anti-Catholic messages.

The offensive billboard ad featured a cartoon image of a smiling Pope John Paul II with the legend, "The bible says:

The number of the beast is the number of a man.”

This incident and its resolution is another example of what can be accomplished when Catholics stand up and protest anti-Catholic bigotry.