

# Media

## MOVIES

### Winter



The movie “Touch” told the story of a man who was a Christ-like figure for the 1990s. He is capable of performing miracles, but is uninterested in spreading the gospel. He enjoys spending time with a female companion. The usual nutty Catholics were showcased, willing to kill for a return of the Latin Mass.

### Spring

“The movie ‘The Saint’ contains one of the most vicious calumnies of Catholicism to tarnish the silver screen,” according to *Boston Herald* columnist Don Feder. “‘The Saint’ joins a long and ignominious line of anti-Catholic cinema, including 1996’s ‘Primal Fear,’ in which sex abuse plays a prominent role.”

Feder was complaining of the movie’s opening scene which contained gratuitous shots at Catholicism.

### June

While dismissing the movie “Bliss” as a silly look at a married couple’s sexual hang-ups, *Chicago Tribune* reviewer John Petrakis noted the gratuitous use of the names Joseph and Maria for the title characters. In case the allusion to the nativity was in doubt, the very “hands-on” sex guru to whom Maria turns for therapy is named Baltazar – the name of one of the three wise men.

### June

In the movie “Face/Off,” a terrorist disguises himself as a Catholic cardinal, “dances like a stripper while wearing a

priest's garb, then gropes a choirgirl," according to a June 27 review in the *New York Times*.

## **October**

**New York, NY** – The movie "Lilies," which won Canada's 1996 Academy Award for best picture, was being shown at the Quad Cinema in Manhattan. The film features an aging bishop who, barricaded inside a confessional in a Quebec prison, is forced to watch an elaborate re-creation of a homosexual episode from his youth. The film is replete with murder, nudity, and men dressed as women.

## **MUSIC**

### **February 6**

Marilyn Manson's shock-rock group hit the charts with "Anti-Christ Superstar." The group's concert in Lubbock, Texas was picketed by Christians opposed to the violence and satanic overtones.

### **July 7**

Following a sustained effort by the league, Sony announced that *O Come All Ye Faithful*, the Christmas album designed to fund the pro-abortion message of its performers, Rock for Choice, would not be re-released. Efforts by the league, as well as by several distinguished Catholic and Protestant leaders, to have this CD removed from the market had previously failed to move Sony. However on June 13, league president William Donohue sent a letter to Sony president Thomas Mottola, outlining plans for a Christmas season boycott of all Sony products if this album were not retired. Donohue made clear that the league's objection was not to the existence of Rock for Choice, nor to its being funded by the pro-abortion Feminist Majority, but rather to the insensitive exploitation of Christmas as a vehicle for pro-abortion fund-raising. In his July 7 response, Mr. Mottola wrote that the

album had "run its course," and that neither it nor any similar album would be released for Christmas 1997.

## **November 10**

**New York, NY** – Musician Ozzy Osbourne exploited the Cross in an ad in *Newsday* publicizing his new release and a related personal appearance at Virgin Megastore in Times Square.

## **NEWSPAPERS**

### **January 17**

**Washington, DC** – Conservative columnist Armstrong Williams wrote an article on Dr. Martin Luther King, saying, "King knew of the continuing legacy of xenophobia and ignorance that led to the enslavement of Africans simply because they were labeled 'infidels' by the Catholic Church." The league registered a complaint against Williams, setting the historical record straight

### **January 24**

In Ann Landers' column, she printed a letter sent to her containing "Biblical Answers Hilarious." Among the quips she found amusing enough to share with her readers was: "Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption."

## **February**

**Philadelphia, PA** – Columnist Melissa Dribben of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* wrote about Secretary of State Madeline Albright's newly discovered Jewish ancestry. The article contained a comment about how Jewish children are often taunted by "parochial schoolkids" and are told that they will "go to hell because you guys killed Christ." League president William Donohue objected to this sweeping generalization and had his letter published in the newspaper.

### **February 5**

*Gannett Newspapers* printed a story on Satanic rituals that featured dead and mutilated animals. It made an oblique and entirely uncalled-for comment that the fields where they were taking place were near a Catholic retreat house; the retreat house was in fact a quarter-mile away.

## **February 16**

**Indianapolis, IN** – *The Indianapolis Star* ran a three part series on sexual misconduct among priests in the Lafayette Diocese. Although there were no current cases at the time of the report, the paper managed to add sensationalism to what should have been an unbiased report. The first sentence read: "In the heart of Indiana lies a Roman Catholic diocese tainted by priestly sins, dark secrets of lust and betrayal that have wounded scores of victims." The series contained numerous graphic headlines, and tawdry details.

## **February 25**

**Arizona** – In a column printed in *The Arizona Daily Star*, Allie Light discussed doctors' attitudes toward patients, saying they were patronizing. The last paragraph, which was only tangentially related to the topic, stated: "People were once put to death by the church for owning books, priests believing that only they should know how to read. Today, apparently, some doctors are descended from those priests."

## **February 26 – March 4**

**New York, NY** – *New York Press* published an article by Larissa Phillips, a diatribe on how much she hates the Catholic Church.

## **March 22**

**Miami, FL** – *The Miami Herald* published an Eternal Gospel SDA ad that was replete with attacks on the Pope and Catholicism in general. Publisher Dave Lawrence agreed not to accept these

ads in the same format again.

## **March 25**

**New York, NY** – *Eastside Resident*, a local New York residential publication, printed an article entitled “Sweet Jesus” comparing “bunnies” to “Jesus” and proclaiming, “Easter...Candy, sex and salvation all in the same holiday.” The article went on to insinuate “Since Jews benefit from the plethora of Easter candy...there is some fear of resentment and retaliation from Christians.”

## **March 27**

**Palo Alto, CA** – The *Palo Alto Daily News* published an ad for a local restaurant, “Beppo,” that asked, “What did you give up for Lent?” The ad included a picture of two priests smoking pot.

## **March 30**

**Hartford, CT** – *Hartford Courant* columnist Barbara Roessner published an article on Easter Sunday that expressed her agnosticism and her disbelief in Christ’s resurrection. The league asked the newspaper whether it would publish an article on Yom Kippur stating how silly was the whole idea of a Day of Atonement.

## **April 5**

**Seattle, WA** – *Seattle Post Intelligencer* columnist Katherine Bourdonnay derided the Christian celebration of Easter, charging that those who do so do not care whom they offend. The Pope, celibacy, the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, the belief in heaven—all were made the object of derision.

## **May**

**New York, NY** – Reporting on a murder in Central Park, New York

newspapers and the Associated Press highlighted the “ex-altar boy” status of one of the teen-age suspects, and also reported that the other suspect was a former student at a Jesuit-run school. The two suspects current enrollment in elite, non-sectarian private schools did not make the headlines, as did the “ex-altar boy” fact in the *Daily News* and *New York Post*.

## **May 18**

**Salem, OR** – The *Statesmen Journal*, in a front page story on a Hispanic girl about to receive her First Holy Communion, criticized the Church for promoting “a culture of selflessness and devotion.” Such a culture, you see, “discourages individual striving” in some children.

## **June**

**Santa Barbara, CA** – The *Santa Barbara News-Press* carried a column by 20 year-old college student Ray di Bartolomeo deriding a Catholic priest celebrating Mass as “a fake” who “reminded me of ‘Humpty Dumpty.’” People in the congregation, he added, were “robots” and “brainwashed zombies.”

## **June 2**

**New York, NY** – A photo of a sexual threesome—a man, his wife and his girlfriend—which photographer James Hamilton took for the *New York Observer*, included in the background a large, prominently displayed picture of the Madonna; even though none of three people featured in the picture and accompanying story were Catholic. The photo and story also ran May 29 in the *New York Daily News*.

## **June 18 – 24**

**New York, NY** – In the *Eastside Resident*, columnist Texas A. Panek boasted about his “Christian-bashing humor, something I’ve indulged in quite a bit in past columns.”

## **Summer**

**Washington, DC** – The Eternal Gospel SDA Church twice took a full page ad in the *Washington Times* attacking the Catholic Church. Much of the ad, which featured a picture of a smiling Pope John Paul II with a smiling President Clinton, was given over to rebutting Sunday as the Sabbath, and labeling the Catholic Church the “Mother of Harlots.”

### **July 3**

**Mattituck, NY** – *Suffolk Times* managing editor Tim Kelly, a self described “fallen Catholic” writing about his son’s Confirmation Day in the Episcopal Church, mocked the Catholic Church for its “endless rules” and went on to declare that “sinful feelings are hard to escape when you’re raised a Catholic.”

### **July 20**

**Seattle, WA** – The *Seattle Times* published a snide commentary by Cynthia Hartwig that discussed the antics of an ex-priest to make the larger point that priests are abnormal.

### **August**

**Sacramento, CA** – A cartoon showing the Pope accepting a cross of “Nazi Gold,” and saying “Bless You, My Son,” to the Nazi officer presenting it, ran in the *Valley Mirror*.

### **August 5**

**Mt. Vernon, IL** – A mainstream newspaper, the *Mt. Vernon Register News*, published, as a paid advertisement, a standard anti-Catholic tract from Chick Publications entitled “The Pope’s Steamroller Grinds on in Northern Ireland.”

### **August 21**

**Los Angeles, CA** – The *New Times* newspaper highlighted its story on the death of a subway worker with a full cover depiction of a subway worker crucified on a cross of railroad

tracks. *Tidings*, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, castigated the *New Times* for using irreverence and blasphemy in a “cheap” and “clumsy swing at publicity.”

## **August 29**

**Skokie, IL** – A cartoon in the *Jewish Star* depicted the Pope’s upcoming visit to Cuba as designed to service American greed. On the Pope’s robe is inscribed “American Tourists to Cuba,” and Fidel Castro is saying to the Pope, “Stay with me three more days, and I’ll throw in a free car rental.”

## **August 30**

**Las Vegas, NV** – Comedian Denis Leary promised to rail against the Catholic Church in his upcoming “Lock-N-Load” comedy tour. He then gave a preview to the *Las Vegas Review Journal*, declaring his intent to start a “church for lapsed Catholics” whose members will “have sex with consenting adults instead of altar boys.”

## **September**

A reporter for the Associated Press (AP), in a story about the tragic gang-rape of a 16 year old girl in Mexico City, wrote that the crime was “an extreme one even in a heavily Roman Catholic and male-dominated society.” After the league objected, AP conceded that our complaint was legitimate.

## **September 10**

**Richmond, VA** – In an interview in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, Episcopal brother Manny Andrade, a gay man who ministers to people with AIDS, took a slap at the Church and its teachings in recalling his decision to leave the Catholic Church. “It was the politics of Roman Catholicism that made me crazy,” he said. “The lunacy that we’re going to make priests be celibate. The lunacy that women can’t be priests. The thought that we want you and your money—we just don’t want you [gay



persons] to live in a loving, monogamous relationship.” From an article of more than 70 column inches on Mr. Andrade’s ministry to AIDS victims, this was the only quote which the *Times-Dispatch* saw fit to pull out and highlight.

## **September 19**

**Baltimore, MD** – Although it merited only a minor mention in the story, and was not cited by anyone as having been related to the crime, the *Baltimore Sun* headlined the fact that a 15 year-old alleged murderer was a former altar boy.

## **Fall**

**Providence, RI** – An article on how parents can help children deal with crises involving a sibling addressed the issue of abuse this way: “If a 9-year old is abused by a priest, for instance, when a younger sibling reaches that age, he might refuse to go to school, fearful of authority figures.” There was no mention of other potential abusers among authority figures, such as teachers, sports coaches, scout leaders, or even ministers or rabbis. Only the priest is singled out as a potential abuser of children. The article, reprinted in the *Providence Journal*, was taken from the *Boston Globe*.

## **October 1**

**Carbondale, PA** – An ad in the *Carbondale News* savaged Catholic beliefs as “gross heresies,” “detestable teachings,” and “abominable lies”; charged Catholics with “cannibalism”; and declared Catholic souls “damned to everlasting perdition.” To make matters worse, the ad was written and paid for by Tom Flannery, a staff member of the *Carbondale News* whose responsibilities include reporting on local Catholic Church events.

## **October 14**

**Los Angeles, CA** – A humor column by Anne Beatts in the *Los*

*Angeles Times*, poking fun at Pope John Paul II's outreach to youth, went over the line when Ms. Beatts derided the Church as "never slow to spot a merchandising opportunity."

## **October 15**

**Martinsburg, WV** – Maura and James Brackett, writing in the *Journal* newspaper in opposition to Catholic schools, delivered an anti-Catholic diatribe replete with false and malicious charges. They accused Catholic schools of sacrificing educational excellence in favor of indoctrination. They charged, without evidence, that the "Catholic hierarchy" in Chicago had "tried to cover up" the beating of a black student in order to protect his white assailants. They falsely accused the league of "threats...against members of the media who report the truth" about the "many cases of sexual molestation" which they attributed, without documentation, to Catholic schools. They wrote that letters to government officials from Catholic school students protesting abortion were "the result of a concerted effort by the Vatican to affect policy in this country." And they declared it "blatant child abuse" for Catholic schools to teach children that abortion is wrong.

## **October 19**

**St. Louis, MO** – Among the 12 teens featured in a *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article on teen attitudes toward sex were three identified as Catholic school students—and all three voiced attitudes in contradiction to Church teaching. Although the *Post-Dispatch* noted that "dozens of teens" had been interviewed, the article would lead us to believe that no Catholic school student said a word in support of Catholic teaching.

## **October 23**

**Hartford, CT** – "Pope Taps Accused Priest for Assembly," screamed a headline in the *Hartford Courant*. The accompanying

article excoriated the Holy Father for inviting Father Marcial Maciel Degollado, founder and head of the Legionaries of Christ, to the Nov.-Dec. Synod for America, because Father Maciel has been accused of sexual misconduct. It is not until the 15<sup>th</sup> paragraph of the article, once the case against him has been firmly established, that we read of Father Maciel's denial of the allegations.

## **November**

***Palm Beach, FL*** – *Palm Beach Post* religion writer Steve Gushee, in a column which Cox News Service distributed for publication elsewhere as well, used the proposed return to meatless Fridays as an opportunity to trash Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and virtually everything about the Church prior to Vatican II.

"Roman Catholics have had too much fun for the last 30 years," Gushee began. "So American Catholic bishops think it may be time to return to the good old days of micromanaging Catholic piety." Those days, he informed readers, were characterized by "knuckle knocking nuns," "an inordinate sense of sinfulness," an "almost neurotic sorrow that Jesus died—and a complete denial of the Gospel."

Gushee was just getting warmed up. Cardinal Law, "the kind of religious conservative who thinks the Spanish Inquisition was enlightened evangelism," is "more comfortable with the images of the past that emphasize suffering, guilt and sorrow," in Gushee's view, than with calling Christians to "joy, thanksgiving and the service of others." It is "bizarre," he continued, for the Cardinal to suggest "that eating fish on Fridays will also help Catholics take a stand against abortion, euthanasia, war, violence and drugs. The call to return to Friday as a penitential day is to beat the grim drum of medieval Christianity. Some churchmen just can't get accustomed to the freedom and joy their faith proclaims."

If only the U.S. Bishops had been blessed with the same theological insights as this Palm Beach religion writer.

## **November 9**

**Jacksonville, FL** – “What makes a human kill?” Why, his rosary beads, obviously, or at least the Catholic religion which they symbolize. That was the message implicit in the *Florida Times-Union*’s use, under the headline, “What makes a human kill?” of a photograph of a death row inmate prominently displaying a set of rosary beads which he is wearing around his neck. Nowhere in the story or photo caption is there any explanation of the relevance of the rosary beads to the story. By contrast, in the *Dallas Morning News* where this story originated, the caption clearly and movingly provided the context of the photograph, explaining that the rosary beads being worn by Darrel Hill on Arkansas’ death row had previously been “worn by friends on the row who were executed.” The two papers’ contrasting treatment of the photograph provided—at the expense of Catholic belief and practice—a textbook example of the difference between professional journalism and tabloid journalism.

## **November 10**

**Trenton, NJ** – *The Times* of Trenton ran an editorial page cartoon on sexual scandal in the military which trivialized the sacrament of Penance.

## **November 12**

**Miami, FL** – Reuters News Service, reporting about a Miami prostitute whose legal defense was that she was just a nymphomaniac, gratuitously included the irrelevant fact that the woman was “a former Catholic high school student.”

## **November 18**

**New York, NY** – The *New York Times* lauded the blasphemous Gober

art exhibit depicting the Blessed Mother “pierced...with a phallic culver pipe,” which the artist said was designed to deprive “the Virgin Mary of the womb from which Christ was born.” “A Madonna and Drain Pipe Radiate an Earthly Spirituality,” gushed a *Times* headline under a color photo of the offensive work. The accompanying article, by Roberta Smith, condescendingly dismissed objections to the work, declaring it “profoundly experiential and even interactive, a journey that must be traveled before an informed opinion can be arrived at.”

## **December**

**Charleston, SC** – Two articles in the *Post and Courier* highlighted a media double standard when it comes to offending the sensibilities of Catholics. On Dec. 7, in an article on a white policeman accused in the death of a black motorist, the word “blacks” is substituted in parentheses for what was apparently a racial slur uttered by the police officer. Three days later, in an article on a couple who had been robbed twice in the same day, the husband is quoted as saying, “We’re as nervous as pregnant nuns at morning Mass.” No effort was made by the paper to change or delete this offensive slur of Catholics.

## **December 4**

**Duluth, MN** – The *Duluth News-Tribune* ran an editorial cartoon which mocked the proposal by the Pro-Life Secretariat of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops that Catholics abstain from meat on Fridays in reparation for the culture of death. The cartoon shows a well-dressed couple in a restaurant, with the woman saying to the waiter: “And to do penance for the culture of death, I’ll have the meatless Friday special...crab-stuffed crepes with lobster saffron sauce.”

## **December 7**

**New Bern, NC** – An ad in the *Sun Journal* newspaper took direct

aim at the Catholic Church. Signed by a George Wetherington, the ad featured a bishop's miter and the headline, "Blasphemy?" When Jesus rose from the dead, the ad declared, "he alone became the forgiver of sins. If any man claims to forgive these sins on earth," the ad continued in a clear reference to the sacrament of Penance, "isn't he claiming to be the same Jesus that died, rose and went back to Heaven?" The papacy was also a target: "When a man takes on the title Holy Father, is he not claiming equality with the Most High God?"

### **December 13**

**Portland, OR** – The *Oregonian*, in a column devoted to "yuletide bloopers" reportedly uttered by children, decided to headline the one which was most blatantly offensive: that "Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption."

### **December 17**

**Pleasantville, NJ** – Reporting on the sentencing of a man convicted of sexually assaulting a five year old boy, *The Press*, a local newspaper, headlined the offender as a "Former janitor at St. Raymond's" Regional Catholic School. Nowhere in the story could the reader learn that the assault had occurred after the offender had left St. Raymond's, where he worked only briefly; nor that the incident was in no way related to St. Raymond's. In a letter-to-the-editor, league president William Donohue wondered whether the offender's past employment would have been headlined had he worked for *The Press*, rather than for a Catholic school.

### **December 19**

**Santa Barbara, CA** – Accompanying the "CD Philes" column in the *Santa Barbara News-Press* was a picture of a music artist with crucifixes dangling from both lenses of his sunglasses. The photo was gratuitous, and the paper showed poor taste in printing it.

## **December 19**

**Los Angeles, CA** – Reporting on a Los Angeles police officer and a bank branch supervisor who were both accused as bank robbery accomplices, *Los Angeles Times* staff writers Matt Lait and Eric Lichtblau made a point of noting that the bank supervisor, Errolyn Romero, was “a Mount St. Mary’s College graduate.” No mention was made of the educational background of her alleged accomplice, Police Officer David Mack.

## **December 23**

**Asbury Park, NJ** – An editorial in the Dec. 23 *Asbury Park Press* was headlined “No grants for churches”; a more accurate version would have read, “No grants for Catholic churches,” reflecting the editorial’s highly selective indignation over church restorations funded by the New Jersey Historic Trust Fund. Citing the New Jersey state constitution’s prohibition on the use of state government funds for building or repairing churches, the editorial took issue with a \$283,000 award from the Historic Trust to St. Mary’s Roman Catholic Church in Morris County. Fair enough—although denying grants for historical preservation to a structure solely because of its religious nature would seem to represent a government bias against religion, which surely is also unconstitutional. More significantly, readers would never have known from this editorial that St. Mary’s was only one of nine churches that received a grant for historical preservation—and the only Catholic church. Was it mere coincidence that the *Asbury Park Press* singled out only the Catholic grant recipient, while having absolutely nothing to say against the grants to the other eight churches? The league thought not, and wrote the newspaper to express our outrage at its transparent bigotry and deceit.

## **December 27**

**Columbus, OH** – *Newsday* columnist Robert Reno, in an op ed

column on health care which appeared in the *Columbus Dispatch*, took a swipe at “Catholic dioceses,” listing them among the health care entities who “will discover new, more imaginative ways to eat their share of the pie that is baked when we have the bad fortune to get sick.” The crack suggested that the Church’s long tradition of caring for the sick is motivated by greed. In a letter to the *Columbus Dispatch*, the league called on Reno to apologize to the Catholic community.

## **PERIODICALS**

### **1997**

*Antarctic Press’s* “Warrior Nuns” comic strip, created by Ben Dunn, features scantily clad, sexy nuns brandishing guns.

### **Winter**

Comic Lea DeLaria explained in *Rolling Stone* why she was such a flashy comedian. “Twelve years of Catholic school. I was a naughty little girl and I thought if I could make that nun laugh, she wouldn’t hit me with that ruler. I owe it all to nuns that I’m a comic and a lesbian.”

### **January 16**

**Midway City, CA** – An article written in the Summer Edition of *The American Cocker Magazine* excoriated the Catholic Church by saying that its teaching on contraception was based on the desire to breed more Catholics for the purpose of making money. The editor of the magazine, Michael Allen, responded to league president William Donohue’s query about why a bigoted article about the Church would be in a magazine about dogs. Without apology, Ms. Allen defended the article.

### **February**

Conservative scholar Irwin Stelzer, director of regulatory policy studies at American Enterprise Institute, contributed an essay to a symposium in *Commentary*, which was a response to



a symposium in *First Things*. Stelzer wrote that Jewish neoconservatives should have known better than to “pitch an intellectual tent broad enough” to include “many Catholics brought up in a tradition that does not welcome dissent from its revealed truths.” He added that Jewish intellectuals “should not expect to be partners in a governing theocracy” with Catholics. He did not indicate which Catholics he meant.

## **April**

**Boston, MA** – *Boston Magazine* printed a story about a retired priest accused of pedophilia. The story was not objectionable, but the headline was. It read, “Department of Immaculate Molestation.”

## **April 14**

*Media Week* published an ad for America’s Health Network that displayed an elderly nun, Sister Mary Elizabeth, with a heading that read, “Don’t do that you’ll go blind.” Below the message was the comment “Everybody thinks they’re a doctor. Fortunately, on America’s Health Network, everybody really is.” The league objected to the stereotypical depiction of Catholic women who devote their lives to God’s work.

## **April – May**

*MAD* magazine, in its April and May editions, portrayed Catholic priests as child-molesting homosexuals, stating in the May issue that virtually all priests are homosexuals and therefore would not be offended by a movie like “Priest.”

## **May**

**Emmaus, PA** – In the May issue of *Men’s Health*, David Courtwright questioned the thesis of a book which alleged that young men who are left alone in large groups tend to be violence-prone. However, Mr. Courtwright scoffed in a parenthetical aside that such a theory “does seem to explain

Catholic boys' schools and the Dallas Cowboys."

## June

*Yahoo* magazine published an article on the "Gay Connection" that listed a number of web sites of interest to the gay and lesbian community. It stated that America OnLine's Forum OnQ "is the largest information provider...to the largest concentration of gay folks anywhere, if you don't count the Catholic priesthood."

## July

**Texas** – "Satan is a woman, the Pope is her puppet, and the world will end in three years," blared the full front page of the *July Texas Monthly*. Inside, the article to which the cover refers says absolutely nothing about the Pope or the Catholic Church.

## July – August

An article on the history of the martini is not where one would expect to find an offensive reference to the virginity of Mary. Yet that is precisely what occurred in the July/August issue of *American Heritage*, where Max Rudin, publisher of the Library of America, related the advice of filmmaker Luis Bunuel: "At a certain period in America it was said that the making of a dry martini should resemble the Immaculate Conception, for, as St. Thomas Aquinas once noted, the generative power of the Holy Ghost pierced the Virgin's hymen 'like a ray of sunlight through a window – leaving it unbroken.'"

## September

An article in the September *Esquire* on Dallas Cowboy Michael Irvin was accompanied by an offensive cartoon showing Irvin hanging from a cross with two scantily clad women in sexually suggestive poses next to him.

## **October 6**

In what can only be described as purely Satanic, *Screw* magazine, published by Al Goldstein, ran pictures depicting Mother Teresa in hard core pornographic poses. One photo shows a naked man having intercourse with her. He has a beard, has blood emanating from his side, and is wearing a crucifix and a crown of thorns, with a halo over his head. There is also a picture of Mother Teresa's face superimposed on the naked body of a woman who has her legs spread. And there is a cartoon of Mother Teresa sitting on a toilet.

## **October – November**

**New York, NY** – The premier issue of a new magazine, *Notorious*, featured an article by Sean Bosker that described his experience of “going to confession” at four New York-area Catholic Churches. Having invaded the sanctity of the confessional to stage these mock confessions, Bosker detailed what it was like for him to confess various sins—all sexual in nature, of course—and then receive “penance” for his transgressions. A non-Catholic himself, he used the article to instruct other non-Catholics on how to engage in a mock confession, and advised readers to “Remember that priests are probably as grateful for some discussion of T and A in the afternoon as anyone.”

## **November – December**

*Mother Jones* magazine featured many articles on religion, almost all of which treated various religions reverently. The lone exception was Catholicism. In a piece by Cheryl Reed, priests and nuns were made out to be sexually promiscuous persons. The point of the article was an assault on celibacy, using anecdotal material to make wild generalizations about the clergy.

## **November – December**

**Dallas, TX** – *The Door*, which bills itself as “The World’s Pretty Much Only Religious Satire Magazine,” caricatured a group of bishops by putting clown noses on them, and captioning the photograph “A Thousand Words,” as in the adage, “A picture is worth a thousand words.”

## **RADIO**

### **Winter**

**Big Rapids, MI** – WYBR/Y-102, an FM station, ran an ad to promote the “Mike and Brian” morning show. It featured the pair dressed as nuns, wearing a habit, and folding their hands in a prayer-like manner. Their eyes were lifted upward to an inscription above the picture which read, “Make Them Your Morning Habit.”

### **January – February**

**Pittsburgh, PA** – WTAE talk show host Lynn Cullen talked for several hours about a local controversy concerning the lengths of skirts worn by some Catholic school girls. Instead of merely discussing the issue, she used the topic to degrade Catholic educational and other institutions.

### **February 12**

**Los Angeles, CA** – A talk show host on KFI radio bashed Catholic priests on Ash Wednesday by making sweeping generalizations and ridiculing the vows of poverty and chastity that priests take.

### **February 12**

Syndicated talk show host Howard Stern used the occasion of Ash Wednesday to do a skit that mocked Catholicism. He performed a mock blessing using cigar ashes on his program.

### **February 12**

**Saginaw, MI** – Radio station WSAM talk show host Ted Maddox suggested that the local Catholic bishops should give out “triscuits” in place of the Communion Host.

## **February 20**

**Philadelphia, PA** – In a parody of Catholicism, WIP Sports Radio made offensive comments regarding the Stations of the Cross, Jesus’ falling the third time, Our Blessed Mother (“Our Lady of Liberals”) and Mary Magdalene (she serviced many men).

## **February 26**

**Dallas, TX** – A KRLD radio talk show host, Rick Roberts, made offensive remarks about Catholicism and encouraged those who called in to do the same.

## **February 26**

**Boston, MA** – WRKO Radio’s *Whitley and Clapproot Show* aired a segment on priest pedophiles insinuating that all Catholic priests are afflicted with this disorder.

## **February 27**

**Colorado Springs, CO** – KVOR’s talk show host Jim Emery made vulgar comments on the recent Vatican statement on divorce and marriage. He also criticized the Pope, stating, “This guy, this Pope, who won’t get laid, is telling his priests who he won’t let get laid that they should counsel people on sexual matters.”

## **March 16**

Howard Stern claimed himself to be “greater than Jesus Christ” while background sound effects simulated nails being hammered.

## **April**

**Birmingham, AL** – WDJC radio’s “Christian-Jew Hour” aired a program that launched a bigoted attack on the Catholic Church

and its teachings.

## **April 20**

**Picayune, MI** – Brother James McCraney of the Sones Missionary Baptist Church spewed inflammatory and bigoted remarks on his radio talk show, “The Bible Truth Show.” He questioned why Catholics should accept any teachings from “a man who calls himself *Father* but dresses like a *mama*.” He criticized Catholic author John O’Brien, claiming he “knows about as much about God as my pet poodle.” Brother McCraney called priests “liars from Hell” and “serpents in the pulpit” for consecrating the Eucharist. He cited Transubstantiation as an “ungodly” doctrine and concluded that the Catholic Church is “the mother of all harlots” and “the source of all untruth.”

## **April 25**

**Philipsburg, PA** – During what he later described as a satirical reporting of a Vatican statement on homosexuality, Nick English of radio station WUBZ-FM commented that Catholic priests had been promoting homosexuality for years—just ask their altar boys. When a local Catholic pastor asked parishioners to respond to the station, Mr. English, without apologizing for his remark, accused the pastor of trying to “cause the economic downfall” of the station, and put “37 people out of work.”

## **May 8**

**Philadelphia, PA** – A discussion of annulments on a WWDB radio show turned into a free-for-all attack on the Catholic Church, with hosts encouraging embittered Catholics to call and vent their anger at the Church.

## **May 11**

The syndicated radio show featuring host Don Imus included a parody by Andy Rooney blasting the Pope and Church teachings

on annulment, calling it "Vatican mumbo-jumbo." To his credit, Mr. Imus commented, "That was unfortunate!" at the conclusion of the skit. The parody was not replayed.

## **May 29**

**Lansing, MI** – WVIC-FM radio aired a discussion about Catholics doing "some weird things" while praising what they termed "recovering Catholics."

## **June**

**Cincinnati, OH** – WSAI Radio defended its airing of an attack on the Catholic Church by a preacher, Brother Stair. Station Manager Peter Zolnowski told the league that Brother Stair was "not anti-Catholic"; but that Michael Kain, Grand Knight-Elect of the Glenmary Knights of Columbus who had complained about the broadcast, had just "happened to tune in on a night when (Brother Stair) was on his Catholic-bashing soapbox."

## **June 6**

Radio talk show host Hank Hanegraaf, president of the Christian Research Institute, branded Roman Catholics as "dangerous" and "divisive" and accused the Catholic Church of "militating against orthodox Christianity."

## **June 16**

**Philadelphia, PA** – WWDB-FM show co-host Susan Bray told an anti-Catholic joke about President Clinton engaging in sexual intercourse with the Blessed Virgin Mary in Heaven. She later apologized after objections were raised by the league's Greater Philadelphia/South Jersey chapter.

## **July**

Exercise guru Susan Powter used her syndicated radio show to deliver an extended and bigoted tirade against the Catholic Church. Among the lowlights:

- *The Catholic Church is “soaked in blood,” having “murdered millions,” skinned people alive, raped and pillaged, and destroyed indigenous cultures.*
- *It is “common” for priests to molest children.*
- *She has slept with a Catholic priest, and “the truth of the matter is many people have had sex with priests and nuns.”*
- *“It’s adultery in the Catholic Church to enjoy sex.”*
- *She was thrown out of the Vatican for wearing a short skirt and a halter top, and because “I asked a priest about idolatry because there were all those dead embalmed priests there in glass coffins.”*

Powter mocked “old pope whatever his name is,” wondering if he “is really alive. I think they took him off the mantle, they took him from the taxidermist.” She asked how one walks into a Catholic Church without vomiting. And she prefaced her remarks by saying she was “raised in the Dominican Catholic convent in Sydney, Australia, so I can say anything I want about the Catholic Church.”

## **July 5**

The Weekend Edition of National Public Radio (NPR), which is taxpayer-funded, featured a segment with musical satirist Tom Lehrer singing “The Vatican Rag,” which ridicules the Eucharist, the doctrine of Transubstantiation, and other Catholic teachings. Host Scott Simon praised Lehrer.

## **July 9**

A segment of the nationally syndicated “Imus in the Morning” show mocked Catholic monks.

## **August**

**San Diego, CA** – “Lash Wednesday,” a Catholic-bashing radio spot, drew thousands of protesting post cards in an effort



mobilized by Carl Horst, president of the league's San Diego chapter. "Lash Wednesday," part of the "Dave, Shelly and Chainsaw" radio show, regularly features callers "confessing" all kinds of sins of the flesh. When one caller referred to a friend's "rumpus room," Shelly and Chainsaw replied, "The Reverend has a rumpus room and his favorite decoration is altar boys."

## **October 7**

**Portland, OR** – Talk show host Lars Larsen of KXL Radio charged repeatedly that the Catholic Church's involvement in the campaign to defeat assisted suicide represented "a foreign government" interfering in an Oregon election.

## **December 4**

Howard Stern continued his tasteless assault on Catholic sensibilities with a lesbian Christmas carol that mocked God and the Pope.

## **December 8**

**New York, NY** – A WOR radio promo for its "Dr. Joy Brown Show" featured a caller lamenting that her husband, "a former Catholic priest," would not allow her to perform oral sex on him. In a telephone conversation, Program Director David Bernstein agreed that the promo was offensive, and assured the league that it had already been pulled and would not run again.

## **December 9**

**Tampa, FL** – The same joke told by Susan Bray on WWDB radio, Philadelphia, in June, about President Clinton having sex with the Virgin Mary in heaven, was told by Mark Larson on WFLA radio in Tampa. The league protested, first by telephone and then by a letter to the station manager, demanding that WFLA follow Ms. Bray's example and apologize on-air.

## **December 23**

***Detroit, MI*** – Dave Barber, filling in for a regular talk show host on WXYT Radio, used the show as an extended anti-Catholic diatribe, ripping Catholic schools, referring to “pedophile priests” and labeling priests “drunks,” and deploring the Vatican’s “millions of dollars in collected art.” A league member who called in to object was dismissed by Barber as a “goose-stepping Catholic,” and cut off the air; while callers who happily participated in Barber’s Catholic-bashing were given ample time to vent.

## **TELEVISION**

### **1997**

NBC’s *Saturday Night Live* regularly features a Catholic schoolgirl character, complete with headband, freaky glasses and a plaid skirt “hiked to the heavens” according to *Entertainment Weekly*. The girl often exposes her underwear, and says such things as, “Sometimes when I get nervous I touch my boobs...”

On Nov. 22, New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani took part in this offensive skit, which that night featured a second Catholic schoolgirl giggling about tongue kissing and getting hickeyes from her boyfriend.

### **January**

Comedy Central aired Monty Python’s *Life of Brian*, a 1979 film mocking the life of Jesus. Roundly condemned for its blasphemous and vulgar content when it was originally released, the movie portrays Jesus as a fool, who, among other things, has sex. Mary is played by a man and uses foul language. It is indicated that Jesus was the product of a rape. The Crucifixion is shown as a big finale, complete with joyful singing.

## **January 6**

*Chicago Hope*, a CBS program, showed a young boy lying in a hospital bed clutching rosary beads. The doctor held them before dropping them in a waste basket, saying that they were not helpful. The doctor also said that the boy had received religious objects from a strange priest.

## **February 7**

*Tonight Show* (NBC) host Jay Leno joked about a Catholic Church having "all you can eat Communion." A day earlier he referred to a Catholic school as "Our Lady of the Evening." Leno subsequently apologized to league president William Donohue.

## **February 10**

Actor LeVar Burton, appearing on the ABC program *Politically Incorrect*, said, "I can say with conviction that the Roman Catholic Church is evil." In an attempt to clarify, Burton said that he meant what was evil were the sisters he was exposed to in elementary school. Later he called league president William Donohue and said that he meant that religion had caused great harm in the history of the world. He ended his discussion with Donohue by apologizing for his comments.

## **February 21**

**Washington, DC** – On the WJLA news broadcast, during a story on an abortion clinic bombing, the anchorwoman mentioned gratuitously that the clinic was "down the street from a Catholic church." The fact that the clinic was across the street from a palm reader's shop was not mentioned.

## **February 23 & 25**

CBS aired a mini-series called *Night Sins* which showed a priest passionately kissing a woman in church and a crazed deacon assaulting the priest, and then committing suicide. The deacon also harbored the body of his wife and misled many

altar boys. He was portrayed as being an evil disciplinarian who was “obsessed” with Catholicism. Actress Valerie Bertinelli generalized about the clergy by saying that it “seems like they all have a secret life, hiding their sins.”

## **February 26**

On *The 700 Club*, Pat Robertson laughed as he and co-host Terry Meeuwsen disparaged the Catholic Church’s position on divorce and remarriage. Robertson commented that “the Holy Father may believe in miracles” and that the Pope “was involved in Angelic visitations that are not necessarily valid.” He also said in a condescending tone, “Maybe somebody will buy into that theory.”

## **March 15**

*Saturday Night Live* presented a parody of the Crusades entitled, “Nude Crusades.” A woman actor mocked the Eucharist when she said “This is my body, now show me yours.”

## **March 18**

The ABC show, *The Practice*, undermined the significance of the seal of confession by depicting a priest on a witness stand outlining the detailed confession of a man who murdered his girlfriend.

## **March 23**

On the NBC show, *Third Rock from the Sun*, John Lithgow announced that he was “so whipped that I feel like a Catholic school boy who just got his knuckles bashed in by the nun that he’s dating.”

## **April**

NBC’s *Law & Order* used one of its main characters to portray growing up “Catholic” as a classic example of child abuse. He claimed that his ten years at Our Lady Queen of Angels made

him a skeptic about religion. He cited as examples nuns who walked around the classroom with rulers and his mother's habit of holding her rosary beads in one hand while severely beating him with the other.

## **April**

ABC's *Nightline* covered the tragedy of Heaven's Gate in a special on religious cults. In the introduction, pictures of the Vatican were included. Lawyer Ron Kuby stated that there was no difference between believing that a space ship was coming to save the cult members and a belief in the Immaculate Conception.

## **April 5**

*Saturday Night Live* did a satirical newscast on a school's banning the artwork of one of its students because the work depicted "a rat sucking the breast of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

## **April 13**

On NBC's *Meet the Press*, Louis Farrakhan blamed the Catholic Church for slavery and all Catholics for the conduct of a few Catholic thugs.

## **April 16**

**Long Island, NY** – Long Island Cablevision's show "Touch Base" included in its skits a commercial for "KHRIST KRISPIES" which ridiculed Christ, the Blessed Mother, the Rosary and Holy Water.

## **April 30**

**Houston, TX** – CBS affiliate Channel 11, KHOU-TV, broadcast a special news series on "wicca," otherwise known as "witchcraft." The participants were portrayed as "good witches" and this religion was effectively proselytized while

burning religious candles of Jesus and Mary.

## **May**

NBC reported on the murder of Stefanie Rabinowitz in Philadelphia by her husband, Craig Rabinowitz. It was noted that Mr. Rabinowitz had been involved with a stripper known as "Summer" who was a graduate of Hallahan Catholic High School. It was not mentioned that the murder suspect was Jewish.

## **May 27**

**New York, NY** – Comedian Jackie Mason taped a show in which he made a series of jokes targeting priests as pedophiles. He ridiculed Catholics throughout the monologue.

## **May 30**

NBC's *Unsolved Mysteries*, narrated by Robert Stack, commented during a feature on James "Whitey" Bulger (the "Don of South Boston") that "Numerous Irish-Catholic families produce one priest, one gangster, one cop, one murderous thug."

## **June 1**

*Comedy Showcase* comedienne Cathy Ladman considered the following to be comic: "My best friend is Lutheran and she told me when Jesus was born, the Three Wise Men visited him and they brought as gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Myrrh? To a baby shower? I guess Mary was very polite about it—myrrh—how lovely. You can never have enough—myrrh. Couldn't they have brought something we need—like a cradle? Jesus Christ! Hey, that's what I'll name him—it's much better than Jeff!" She

added that "Then Joseph and Mary would throw parties. Who's coming? The Wise Men! They always bring bad gifts. I hope they follow the wrong star and get lost. Bad mood—bad mood! Of course I'm in a bad mood. I haven't had sex—EVER!"

## June 9

Fox Network's *Mad TV* mocked Mother Teresa's ministry in India in a skit, "Mother of Mercy."

Mother Teresa was portrayed in a bikini while nursing a baby.

## June 20

**Burbank, CA** – In a KNBC news story of a gruesome murder, reporter Kelly Lang made a point to identify one of the two suspects as a former altar boy. The religious background of the other suspect was not mentioned.

## July

After reading promos heralding a new TV series about an irreverent priest who doubts the existence of God, the league began urging members to express their concerns about Disney/ABC's "Nothing Sacred."

League president William Donohue, after previewing the pilot episode on July 24, declared it to be "worse than expected." The league's main objections to the show have been that it promotes the most positive stereotype of Catholics who dissent from Church teachings while fostering the most negative stereotype of those who remain loyal to the Church; and that it deliberately denigrates the official teachings of the Church by unfavorably contrasting them to the trendy positions of dissenting Catholics.

In a July 21 letter to the league, Capuchin Franciscan Father Gregory Coiro, director of media relations for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, rebuked the producer of "Nothing Sacred" for implying that Father Coiro's review of the pilot episode signified Church approval of the show. In fact, Father Coiro wrote, "the pilot's script contained a number of inaccuracies concerning Catholic belief and practice in addition to numerous instances of erroneous, offensive, insulting and

objectionable dialogue.” He praised the league for “telling the truth about ‘Nothing Sacred’ in the face of its executive producer’s attempts to deceive the public.”

## **July 16**

MTV’s “The Real World” kicked off its sixth season with an attack on Catholicism. Featuring a group of strangers who come to work and live together, the show identifies the religion of only the two Catholic characters. The Church is described as threatening, “dogmatic Christianity,” and as “really bad for women.” The Catholic woman is accused of trying to bring her values into the bedroom, and she is targeted for corruption by the others.

## **July 27**

On CBS *60 Minutes*, the writer of the music for *The Song of Bernadette* ridiculed the story of Bernadette, drawing laughs from host Morley Safer.

## **July 30**

On an A & E Network “American Justice” segment entitled “Mob Hit Men,” backdrops showing a statue of the Blessed Mother and two churches were included, with no evident contextual relationship to the subject matter of the show.

## **August**

The league launched a petition drive calling on Disney chairman Michael Eisner to withdraw “Nothing Sacred” from Disney/ABC’s fall lineup. On August 8, in a letter accepting President Clinton’s invitation to the White House to attend an address by the President on religious liberty, league president William Donohue called on President Clinton to also speak out against “the exploitative and highly politicized depiction of Catholic priests in ‘Nothing Sacred.’” On August 15 President Clinton responded, writing that he shared the



league's "concern regarding negative or irresponsible portrayals that send our children the wrong message." Unfortunately, the President's letter did not address the league's central concern about "Nothing Sacred," which has to do with its ideological agenda rather than with negative messages toward children.

## **August**

TV Guide reported that "Oz," an HBO show set in prison, is not only "a show about hate"; it also "mocks God," and grossly denigrates Catholic belief in the Eucharist as cannibalism. A killer who had slain and eaten his own mother praises Catholic teaching that the Eucharist is the body of Christ. "How can I not get behind a religion like that?" he asks.

## **August**

A & E Mystery Movie, "A Touch of Frost," featured two priests—a retired priest with a drinking problem and a young priest who breaks the seal of the confessional, and who later disparages the Church's commitment to priestly celibacy.

## **August 1**

An advertisement on Nickelodeon for an upcoming MTV program, *Apartment 3F*, mocked the crucifixion, with a comedian on stage referring to the "great abs" of Christ on the Cross.

## **August 5**

During a CBS-TV movie, "Breach of Faith, Family of Cops II," a policewoman investigating the murder of a priest in church related to a colleague how she used to be a Catholic but no longer agrees with Church teaching. The comment bore no relation to the story line of the show.

## **August 15**

**Tacoma, WA** – On the Feast of the Assumption, KBTC, a PBS

affiliate, aired a trilogy of programs— “Goddess Remembered,” “The Burning Times,” and “Full Circle”—which promoted paganism, witchcraft, goddess worship and earth worship, while denigrating religion in general and Catholicism in particular. Among the offensive material was a dismissal of the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe as goddess worship.

## **August 27**

Bill Maher, host of ABC-TV’s “Politically Incorrect,” had a fun evening leading his guests in a mocking harangue of the Catholic Church—making cruel jokes about the age and health of Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa, belittling Church teachings, and charging the Church with “2000 years of corrupt bureaucracy.”

## **September**

“Nothing Sacred” debuted Sept. 18 with a pilot episode that featured the main character, Father Ray, doubting the existence of God; declaring that he would no longer hear sexual sins in confession, as he “wasn’t ordained to be a sexual traffic cop”; advising a young woman to follow her conscience in deciding whether to have an abortion; and making clear, in a discussion with a diocesan official, that he disagrees with the Church’s teaching against abortion. In an overwhelming response to the petition drive launched by the league in August, a half-million signatures were collected and delivered to Disney chairman Michael Eisner, protesting “Nothing Sacred.” On Sept. 8 the league ran an ad in *Advertising Age*, advising companies to avoid sponsoring “Nothing Sacred,” and promising to mobilize the league’s 350,000 members, as well as other groups, in a boycott of advertisers who continued to sponsor the show. By month’s end, 24 organizations—including, as promised, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim, as well as Catholic groups—had signed on to the league’s campaign to boycott sponsors; and American Isuzu Motors had become the first sponsor to withdraw its

advertising from the show.

### **September 1**

On Comedy Central's "The Daily Show" the Blessed Mother was shown as a "Where's Waldo" character concerning apparitions.

### **September 2**

On CBS-TV's "Late Show With David Letterman," "Dave's Top Ten" featured "Good Things About Performing a Concert for the Pope," which made fun of a number of Catholic teachings and practices.

### **September 8**

On CBS "This Morning," Reverend Donald Reeves, an Anglican priest, criticized the late Mother Teresa

as a "very canny peasant," and a "bossy boots," who cared more about charity than social justice. He added that she had "espoused a former Roman Catholicism which, at least in Europe, and I think in parts of America, people are trying to get rid of."

### **September 13**

Disney-owned ABC, in a glaring exception to the generally respectful coverage of Mother Teresa's funeral, allowed Christopher Hitchens to lambaste the late champion of the poor for her alleged "false humility" and "rabid fundamentalism." Hitchens, a writer for *Vanity Fair*, has a notorious history of Catholic-bashing, and is the author of an undocumented, hate-filled book against Mother Teresa. Particularly offensive was ABC anchor Peter Jennings allowing Hitchens to continue his diatribe during the Consecration of the Host at Mother Teresa's funeral.

### **September 13**

ABC-TV's "America's Funniest Commercials" showed two nuns re-attaching a penis to a statue of a boy, then one nun returning to the statue later to turn the penis upward.

## **September 26**

Whoopi Goldberg, on ABC's "20/20," harshly and unfairly accused Pope John Paul II of rejecting gays and young people, saying the Pope "infuriates" her. League president William Donohue, given an opportunity to preview the interview on NBC's "Extra," refuted Goldberg's charges. He noted the Pope's overwhelming popularity among young people, and pointed out that the Pope's upholding of Church teaching against homosexual behavior no more represents a rejection of gays than his upholding of Church teaching against fornication and adultery represents a rejection of heterosexuals. Goldberg, upon hearing Donohue's comments, called the league personally, asking to speak with him. When he was unavailable, she had a personal letter delivered to him, along with a copy of her book—which Donohue subsequently read, and described as "pure filth, the kind of screed that one might expect from an immature adolescent boy, not from an adult professional woman."

## **October**

The outpouring of opposition to "Nothing Sacred" snowballed on all fronts. The league's petition drive to Disney chairman Michael Eisner reached 750,000 signatures. Eight more groups joined the league's campaign to boycott the show's sponsors, bringing the number of supporting organizations to 32. And by the end of October, 20 advertisers had announced their decision to withdraw as sponsors of the show. Disney/ABC, in an unprecedented effort to save a floundering show, responded on Oct. 23 with full page ads in every major newspaper in the nation, quoting four priests who liked the show. Actor Kevin Anderson (Father Ray) also took to the airwaves, pleading in television ads for the public to watch the show and make up

their own minds whether it was “controversial,” “blasphemous,” or the “best new drama on TV.” Unfortunately for him, many Americans had already reached such a determination, as “Nothing Sacred” continued, week after week, to languish at or near the bottom of the television ratings.

## **October 8**

Richard Jeni’s “The Good Catholic Boy” on HBO ended with a string of blasphemous statements against Roman Catholicism.

## **October 14**

In an episode of the new CBS show, “Michael Hayes,” a Catholic priest, after being video-taped hearing the confession of a man involved in a terrorist plot, violated his priestly duties by testifying for the prosecution. The show, clearly based on the 1996 real-life video-taping of a confession by an Oregon district attorney, concluded that justice is best served by having a priest violate the seal of the confessional; thereby promoting the idea that religion should bow to the power of government whenever there is a conflict between Church and state. The show also portrayed the Church hierarchy—in the person of the Archbishop of New York—as being concerned solely with its own parochial interests.

## **October 18**

HBO’s *Comedy Showcase* included a spoof of Catholic upbringing, mocking the Mass and the Eucharist.

## **October 26**

“The Devil’s Child,” a television movie on ABC, featured a crazy Catholic mother who gives her daughter to Satan. There were also several snide references to Catholic girls and Catholic education.

## **November**

As the league's petition drive against "Nothing Sacred" soared to over a million signatures, and the list of advertisers withdrawing their sponsorship climbed to 27, media supporters of the show turned their sights on the league. The *New York Times*, among others, pigeon-holed the league as "a conservative group"; the *Chicago Tribune* went even further, labeling the league "a fairly extreme group." The *National Catholic Reporter*, the *New York Observer* and *Commonweal* all focused their commentary on league president William Donohue, apparently seeking to make him, rather than the agenda of "Nothing Sacred," the issue. To top it off, Father Andrew Greeley, never one to let an inconvenient fact stand in the way of a good tirade, accused the league of being so obsessed with "Nothing Sacred" that "it seems not to have noticed the horror at Stanford." In fact it was Father Greeley who seemed not to have noticed that—long before he wrote this piece—the league had gotten Stanford to apologize for its band's ridicule of Irish-Catholics during half-time of the Oct. 4 Notre Dame-Stanford football game.

Meanwhile, ABC ordered nine more episodes of "Nothing Sacred," completing its full season slate of 22—despite the fact that a number of shows with higher ratings, such as "Time Cop" and "Over the Top," had been canceled. Indeed, the network did not order additional episodes of the comedy "You Wish," which had averaged a 7.1 rating for Sept.-Oct., compared to a 4.7 average for "Nothing Sacred."

This unwavering commitment to "Nothing Sacred," despite failing ratings and a dearth of sponsors, only served to underscore the league's contention that the show's real purpose is as a vehicle for promoting an ideological agenda. Actor Kevin Anderson acknowledged as much: "I wouldn't go so far as to say the show will change society or culture or anything like that," he told the *Los Angeles Daily News*. "But I do think, within the Catholic Church, it has nudged the rock a few more inches." And that, after all is said and done, is

what it is all about.

## **November**

Comedian Denis Leary was true to his word. His "Lock-N-Load" show aired throughout November on HBO, and was just as offensive and blasphemous as he had promised in his August *Las Vegas Review Journal* interview—if not more so. Performing on a set gratuitously designed to look like a Catholic Church, complete with religious statues, Leary entertained his audience with an endless string of profanities, and concluded with a savage attack on Catholic priests, bishops, and Pope John Paul II. Among the titles listed on the CD version is a three minute routine which he calls "F\*\*K the Pope."

## **November**

On CNBC Charles Grodin, reporting on the poverty of a run-down section of Los Angeles, announced with disgust that the Catholics of Los Angeles were going to build a \$50 million cathedral in the midst of all that poverty. No mention, apparently, of all the resources the Church devotes to helping the needy.

## **December**

Seven more companies withdrew their advertising from "Nothing Sacred," bringing to 34 the number of sponsors who renounced the show. With ratings continuing to sag, ABC—still refusing to give up on the program—announced that beginning in January it would be moved permanently from Thursday to Saturday nights. Supporters of the show continued to scapegoat the league, with Gail Lumet Buckley of *America* magazine labeling league president William Donohue a "Grand Inquisitor" who "sows class war, as well as religious war."

## **December 6**

*Saturday Night Live* was at it yet again, with a spoof by host

Nathan Lane of Sister Wendy. Lane, while portraying the art critic nun, had his hands on the genitals of a statue.

## **December 10**

Ted Turner, discussing the environment and population control with Sam Donaldson on ABC's "Prime Time Live," tried to link Catholic teaching on birth control to past toleration of slavery. After Turner advised people to "still have lots of sex but use birth control," Donaldson responded, "Well there's the Catholic Church [that] doesn't believe in that." "Well, I...that, uh, goes back a long way," Turner replied with his usual eloquence, "but it's time to, uh, change our attitudes about things. We've done that with a lot...I mean, the Catholic Church allowed slavery over a hundred years ago, but now that's been done away with." Of course, up until a little over a hundred years ago, slavery had been universally accepted, and the Catholic Church had historically tried to ameliorate its harshness, when not calling for outright abolition. That the Church failed to do so forcefully in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was due at least in part to this nation's ostracizing of Catholics as outsiders, in the same way that Turner's gratuitous comments ostracize Catholics.

## **December 13**

More *Saturday Night Live*:: This week's insult to Catholics was a parody of Pope John Paul II reading in Latin, without knowing "what he was talking about."