

# Media



## January

*Request* magazine published a painting under the headline, “10 Things Jesus Christ and Michael Jackson have in Common,” in which Michael Jackson was made to look like Jesus Christ, complete with halo. Among the ten things held in common were: “Oprah claims personal relationship to both;” “Suffer the little children to come unto me;” “Needed 12 PR men to handle spin control;” and “Never really had a serious relationship with Brooke Shields.”

## January 10

*The John Larroquette Show* aired an episode called “Faith” which dealt with the characters’ reactions to an alleged apparition of Jesus. The apparition was seen at a bus station loading dock and people flocked to it, leaving votive candles, flowers, even a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

## January 18 – 24

The cover story of the *New York Press*, “The Angel Factory: Making Martyrs & Monsters,” by William Monahan, used John Salvi, the gunman who opened fire in two abortion clinics in late 1994, as an example of “a Catholic success story...the sort of Catholic the Church has been sadly lacking for years—which is to say, a Catholic.” The article attacked the Church at length, criticizing the sacraments, religious, saints, martyrdom, the Pope, Catholic education, etc. In explaining Salvi’s behavior, Monahan wrote, “Salvi was thinking crazily, but he was thinking in Catholic terms,” and that “the Church definitely can’t say that he wasn’t listening in catechism class.”

## January 20

**Cincinnati, OH** – A guest, Rich Walberg, on radio station WCKY read his list of “news events” of the past week. One item on his list read in part: “little boys who play with little boys grow up to be archbishops.”

## **January 22**

FOX-TV's *House of Buggin'* contained an offensive ten-minute satire on priestly celibacy, including numerous sexual comments.

## **January 29**

MTV aired the program, *The State*, which depicted a crudely altered recreation of the Last Supper. Jesus Christ, as well as each of the twelve apostles, were demeaned and, using a play on words, each character was shown repeating the offensive term “balls.” Jesus was mocked and blasphemed.

## **February**

In an interview with Timothy Leary in *Psychology Today*, Leary attacked the Catholic Church, and charged that the Pope and Mother Teresa were “the two most evil people alive.”

## **February 9**

**Fort Lauderdale, FL** – The local *Sun-Sentinel* published a four page ad by a Seventh Day Adventist splinter group in which the Catholic Church was maligned. The Church was accused of trying to establish a New World Order with the Pope conspiring with President Clinton to take over the world. The paper later offered an apology and a pledge not to run such ads again.

## **February 19 – 20**

Arts and Entertainment Network (A&E) aired the film *The Boys of St. Vincent*, which even PBS would not touch. The movie is about priestly pedophilia in an orphanage in New Foundland. It was so vile that even the *Village Voice* viewed it as

deliberately offensive.

## **April**

*The Basketball Diaries* is a film about Catholic school boys who have gone wrong. The *Washington Post* wrote that "The movie's grotesque parade of corrupted Catholic schoolboys, sadistic priests and sexually predatory basketball coaches just might throw them [the Catholic Church] off the scent of the currently controversial *Priest*." Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch was highly critical of the movie. "In keeping with Hollywood's unfair depiction of the clergy, the teacher is portrayed as an ogre who is devoid of compassion and enjoys the flogging."

## **April 7 – 13**

**Hampton, NH** – "Another Pope Bashing?!", a piece published in the *Seacoast Times*, concludes with this: "If Catholics cannot separate their religious obligations from their...secular...constituency, then they must not be allowed to hold public office...unless a Catholic candidate either renounces his religion or publicly states his intent to disobey papal rule...It would be unfortunate to have to cast votes according to candidates' religion. But that would be less troublesome than returning to Dark Ages-style Catholic rule."

## **April 17**

The *New Yorker* featured a cover during Holy Week of the Easter bunny, clad in a business suit, crucified against the backdrop of a tax form. In making a point about conservatives' reverential views about tax cuts, the artist unnecessarily abused Christian symbols during the most sacred time of year for Christians.

## **April 19**

*Priest* opened after it was originally scheduled for a Good Friday debut. The Disney-Miramax film not only showed five priests with serious problems, it also placed responsibility for their dysfunction on the Church. Two priests were having affairs, one with a woman, the other, with a man. A third priest was a drunk, another was psychotic, and the bishop was evil and cruel. There was not one well-adjusted priest in the film. The Church was depicted as the cause of all the troubles; the celibacy requirement was targeted. Stereotypes abounded which served to stigmatize the Church and presented it as contemptible and destructive. Director Antonia Bird said her feeling about the Church "seethe[d] with rage." Jimmy McGovern, the writer, called the priests that he knew as a child "reactionary bastards."

## **June**

Nickelodeon's *Toaster Man* featured an opening scene on one episode that had nothing to do with the plot. Toaster Man is at a podium, raising what looks as if it were the Eucharist while speaking solemnly. After speaking, he calls out a number with the scene turning to a bingo hall.

## **June 4**

CBS' *The Wright Verdicts* featured a bigoted anti-Catholic episode. Negative stereotypes were used including a child abuse scandal which was covered up; sexism in the Church; bullying bishops, hypocritical priests, and brutal nuns. Further, there was a nun who had had an abortion before entering the convent. There was persecution of a gay priest. Papal infallibility was trivialized and the seal of the confessional was mocked. Dick Wolf's program showed the nun and the homosexual priest in sympathetic terms. The real culprit—the nun was accused of killing the Archbishop—was a cruel Monsignor, who also happened to be a pedophile.

## **June 6**

**New York** – Howard Stern was heard on WXRK-FM interviewing a Catholic high school girl applying for a job. He asked her if she wore panties. He commented that he liked to have sex with Catholic high school girls.

### **June 13**

*Dateline*, an NBC news program, featured an interview with Scott O'Grady, the American who was shot down over Bosnia. Jane Pauley commented, "A devout Roman Catholic, O'Grady made his confirmation at age thirteen, *and unlike many of his peers never left the Church.*" [our emphasis] Dr. Donohue issued a statement that this comment was "snide, [and] gratuitous." Jane Pauley denied that bigotry motivated her comment.

### **June 19**

In a commentary, Ray Richmond of the *Los Angeles Daily News* discussed Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley, writing "What are these kids...gonna say? No, we aren't doing it. We're planning on going the Immaculate Conception route."

### **July 8**

The HBO comedy special, *Kathy and Mo: The Dark Side*, included characters who said, "If there is a God, I believe that he or she is definitely within us...I can't believe we fell for that all-powerful, judgmental, Catholic God shit..." Another character said, "I haven't been to confession in like 15 years, right? I could like quote the Bible. I was so into that Catholic garbage."

### **July 16**

**Los Angeles, CA** – KFI radio talk show host Bill Press insulted the Catholic Church and the celibacy requirement for priests. Among his remarks were the following: "You don't need a penis to be a priest...Do you need a penis to be a penis? I say no,

not even a Catholic priest...I mean, what is that job all about? It is not molesting little boys...."

## **August**

**Puyallup, WA** – The *Heralds of Truth* published *Earth's Final Warning* which predicted in its headline "A New World Order Is Coming!" The blame for this development was placed on the papacy. Headlines inside the publication included: "Will Rome Rule the World Again?" A history of the Catholic Church was presented and comments like "Popery had become the world's despot" abounded.

## **August**

*Jeffrey* is the story of homosexual couples and love made complex as well as deadly because of AIDS. Jeffrey (Steven Weber), according to the *New York Post's* movie reviewer Thelma Adams, was "(f)ed up with the demands and tensions of safe sex...[and] is ready for celibacy." But, then he met a "dream-boat" who was named Steve (Michael T. Weiss); however, he had AIDS, which is a stumbling block to their union. What made this interesting to Catholics was the character Father Dan (Nathan Lane), who was described as "a horny, gay Catholic priest...[He] sees shades of the divine in sex..." Further, Father Dan said, "Maybe you didn't hear me. I'm a Catholic priest. Historically that falls somewhere in between chorus boy and florist."

## **August 2**

*Newsweek* featured an article on singer Alanis Morissette whose lyrics are bawdy and, as the writer Jeff Giles pointed out, reminiscent of Sinead O'Connor. Instead of just discussing the singer and her background, Giles added editorial comment. "She grew up in Ottawa...and was sent to Catholic school. (Which may explain the blue lyrics.)"

## **August 10 – 16**

**Orlando, FL** – The *Orlando Weekly's* Liz Langley wrote an article entitled "Possession is nine-tenths of the fun." She purchased Communion Wafers at a religious store. She wrote, "These are the little wafers that Catholics believe are the body of Christ. These, I thought, might come in handy if you were possessed and couldn't get to a priest right away...If you have the box of Jesus on your hands, you might be able to get out of this pickle on your own." Although she was informed by a priest that the bread does not become the Body of Jesus until transubstantiation occurs, she thought it would be fun to "[m]ortify your Catholic friends by setting them out with the hors d'oeuvres at a party." She suggested that using a more pleasant tasting food such as Twinkies might be more of a crowd pleaser.

## **August 11**

Arts and Entertainment Network (A&E) aired a program called *A&E Investigative Reports: The Pope and the Nazis*, which said that Pius XII was guilty of passive acquiescence with the Nazis. The investigation concluded that the Pope was a failure who did little or nothing to thwart the Nazis slaughter of the Jews; this was the conclusion despite statements to the contrary from his contemporaries, Golda Meir, Albert Einstein, *The New York Times*, Pinchas Lapide, Jeno Levai, Emilio Zolli, the World Jewish Congress, etc.

## **August 12**

**Queensboro, KY** – In his syndicated column, Clark Morpew charged that some in the Catholic hierarchy "love secrets more than they love themselves." He continued, "The thing I have never understood about Catholicism is why there is a need for all the levels of power, where problems can be hidden...." He concluded, "The secrecy of the Catholic Church has to end."

## **September**

A promotional spot for FOX's *The Preston Episodes* featured the

show's star, David Alan Grier, taking a cheap shot at Mother Teresa. Grier pretended in this radio ad that she was walking toward him while he was naked; after a short pause there was the sound of a woman screaming. The ad was carried on several stations without the consent of the local FOX affiliates. FOX headquarters in Los Angeles apologized and pledged not to run the ad again.

## **September 8**

*TV Nation*, a FOX program, aired a segment in which the sacrament of reconciliation was mocked. The host and executive producer, Michael Moore said, "Sinners can be winners." The story was designed to present a "consumers' guide" to obtaining the best penance by having a young Catholic woman confess a sin at twenty-six New York area churches. Moore insisted that actual sins be confessed and he hired a male model to function as a constant temptation as the young woman repeated the same sin—expressed in different ways—in confession. Another person was shown using an adding machine to tally her penances. In the end, Moore said, "The preceding was a re-enactment. All the churches and penances, though, were real. The participants were bona fide Roman Catholics who believe in the pains of Hell and the existence of a merciful God." On the screen were the words "No actual commandments were broken during the broadcast."

## **September 11**

**New York** — *New York* magazine previewed the papal visit to New York. "The church will make room in a separate field for all you lapsed Catholics who didn't make it to the parishes where tickets will have been distributed...The whole hoo-ha may make John Paul a bigger star than Paul Simon..." In addition to the irreverent prose, the magazine included a picture of the Pope with a sign in the background with the word CONDOM colorfully spelled out.



## September 12

**Los Angeles, CA** – Cyndi Lauper, a pop singer, was Tom Snyder's guest on *The Late, Late Show* and the two discussed Catholicism and her childhood experience for much of the program. Among the disparaging remarks, Lauper presented a "theory" that God had nothing to do with nuns who "tried to be good but the whole theory of that organization [Catholic Church] is about oppression, oppression of women..." She discussed the Blessed Virgin and said that "the only way that she conceived the Son of God was through this big miracle which means that the gift God gave women to give birth, the one gift...for us is an evil basically..." Her commentary extended to the clothing of nuns and priests. "I'm supposed to feel bad about being a woman; these dames [nuns] they gotta look ugly and this guy's [priest] wearing a flowing skirt...He wants to wear a skirt, he's got the whole drag thing going, he's got a hat like a penis..." The ridicule ended with Snyder saying, "Bless me, Father, for I've had impure thoughts."

## September 16

A Seventh Day Adventist pastor on cable television presented "eight points" to demonstrate his thesis that the papacy is the beast. With "love and compassion" the pastor asserted the eight characteristics which he said indicated the Church is the fulfillment of the Book of Revelation about the Antichrist. Among these are that the beast would have world wide power, would rule for forty-two months, and would be guilty of blasphemy. Also, the Antichrist would war with and persecute the saints. To him this is the Catholic Church and he positively identified the papacy as the beast of the Antichrist.

## September 21

**New York** – In a column in *New York Newsday*, Jimmy Breslin took a shot at the Pope. "He [the Pope] can be counted on for a

liberal's exciting, searing attack on a greedy society....then can be counted on to turn the rest of his speech into an attack on women, on sex, on condoms, abortion, anything to do with women, and wreck the effect of his marvelous social expressions."

## **September 22**

The United Artists' movie, *Showgirls*, was not only extremely lewd, but it also featured attacks on the Blessed Virgin Mary. The "f—g Virgin Mary" was said by one person and in the same scene a heavy set woman showed her breasts while making another lewd reference to the Blessed Mother.

## **September/October**

*The End Times and Victorious Living* newspaper, a ministry of the Paw Creek Church, featured anti-Catholic diatribes and ads for books and cassettes from well known bashers. One article on the front cover was called "A Marriage From Hell: Catholics and Protestants Together." The article asserted "that Catholicism is totally bankrupt and the very instrument of the Antichrist. It is as dark as hell itself...." The newspaper also claimed that Marian apparitions approved by the Church as genuine are demonic deceptions.

## **October 1**

**San Francisco, CA** — In describing in the *San Francisco Examiner* why Dublin has become a European capital, Pete Hamill opined that the lessening of Church authority has liberated the people who can now enjoy life. Hamill wrote: "That Stalinesque censorship was executed at the bidding of the Catholic Church...The traditional obsession with sex extended to movies, television...[and] power was wielded like an ax." Later, after further explaining the Church's oppression of the people, Hamill said, "An archbishop was exposed as a cruel hypocrite...Other priests were charged with pedastery, using their ecclesiastical powers to seduce schoolboys." He

was triumphant in declaring that the liberated people would not go back to the days before abortion, contraception, and divorce.

## **October 5**

*NBC Nightly News* did an "In Depth" report on the Church featuring representatives from the groups Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) and Dignity. Presented as authentic, neither group is recognized by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. They are dissident groups. One report showed an engaged couple who thinks premarital sex and birth control are acceptable. Also featured was a Dignity member who "hasn't given up on Catholicism, but the Catholic mass he attends each week is said in an Episcopal church." CFFC's Frances Kissling presented her view: "You can be a good Catholic and be pro-choice."

## **October 5**

**New York** – Howard Stern took the text of a papal speech during the Holy Father's visit and added sexual comments that were obscene.

## **October 5**

**Newark, NJ** – The Bible Students Congregation of New Brunswick took out an advertisement in the *Newark Star-Ledger* in which they asserted their Protestant belief that sees the "papacy as the Antichrist."

## **October 8**

**San Francisco, CA** – In the sports section of the *San Francisco Examiner*, Ray Ratto wrote, "Since the Sharks Sharks invented teal, angry looking animals with hockey sticks in their mouths, bungee-jumping stuffed seafood mascots and a product distribution scheme that would shame the Catholic Church, a lot of things have happened in the National Hockey League."

## **October 9**

**East Brunswick, NJ** – *The Home News & Tribune* accepted an advertisement from the Bible Student Congregation of New Brunswick called “John Paul II: World Statesman”; it read, among other things, that “the Pope has an intelligence gathering network that is the envy of every government.” Who does the work? Priests. It asserted that “many Christians believe any attempt to establish the Kingdom of God before Christ’s return is identified in Scripture as the work of the ‘antichrist.’”

## **October 9**

**San Francisco, CA** – In an article about the Twentieth Annual San Francisco Comedy Competition, an *Examiner* staff critic commented on the second place winner. He said that he “risked an eternity in hell by referring to the Catholic communion hosts as ‘Christ Chex’ and ‘Croutons 0 Christ.’” In an editorial comment, Marine opined, “After all, what’s damnation when there’s serious money on the line?”

## **October 10**

**Miami, FL** – Alexander Veiga, the Opinion editor of *The Beacon*, the newspaper of Florida International University, penned a commentary on the Pope right after his visit to the U.S. comparing the Pontiff to Don Corleone, saying he should not be heeded because “we don’t need anything he’s selling.”

## **October 11 – 17**

John Spain in a column for the *Irish Voice* mocked the Pope for his accent and for his teachings on sexuality. He discussed the problems of sexual abuse among priests in Ireland, condemning the Church’s teachings as “stifling.” “[T]he fear and guilt induced by a traditional Catholic upbringing means that they cannot cope with an adult sexual relationship, and are reduced to getting what satisfaction they can by molesting

kids.”

## **October 12**

**Eugene, OR** – Alan Siporin, in his column wrote a piece called “Pope Friction.” In it, he said the Pope was “going to be a target for humor and even ridicule.” He commented, using slang terminology, that the Pope “allegedly” never had sexual intercourse yet “condemns these women as sinners unless they abstain from sex except for the expressed purpose of procreation.” He further opined, “That a man who has never experienced the joys of sex would put forth the abstention proposition is understandable. What is so outlandish is that that anyone pays attention to him.”

## **October 16**

**Brooklyn, NY** – In a column called “A Britisher’s View,” Shavanna Abruzzo imagined a conversation between O.J. Simpson and His Holiness. The Pope told Simpson that he watched the trial, neglecting the faithful. Simpson replied that the Pope’s concern undermined what is said about the Church and its desire to gain riches for itself. The Pope confided to him that he was charging him less than his lawyers and that he could guarantee him a happy afterlife “‘just as soon as the check’s cleared.’” In discussing the case, the Pope said to Simpson that the athlete had a lot in common with the Church. The Pope explained, “‘Just look at my own priests, one’s molesting a kid here, another’s having his way with a parishioner there...’” And the Pope’s motivation for consoling Simpson? “‘Actually, I was rather hoping to snag a spot on your pay-per-view special...’cause I’m getting too old to gallivant around the world.’”

## **October 20**

**Montauk, NY** – The “Gospel According to Harold” was a piece in the *Montauk Pioneer* that satired the life of Jesus in a most disrespectful way. Among the quips that mocked the Gospel

included the use of the image of Jesus jumping into the river, cannonball style, where He was baptized. In listing the Apostles, one line described Judas, "who often kissed the Lord in public, causing him much chagrin and embarrassment." On Jesus' preaching, it read: "This caused the Pharisees...to make circles around their ears with their index fingers when His back was to them." Further, "He gave them all glasses of wine...[saying] 'This is my blood.' Hearing this, the Apostles all spat...After they had come to the realization that it was...only wine, there was much laughter..."

## **October 26**

**Albany, NY** – A local poet/musician, Mary Panza, displayed her vulgarity in degrading the Blessed Virgin on her CD called *Volume*, which she co-produced. In mocking her posterior she put words in Mary's mouth that belong in the gutter. A sample from "I Saw the Blessed Virgin at the Lancome Counter at Macy's": "You've been agonizing over that butt of yours for years now. From the time you were in Catholic school...Honey, shut the f-k up." The writer of an article about her thought the verse was "hilarious."

## **November 10**

**San Francisco, CA** – Gene Burns guest hosted Ron Owens' program on KGO-AM and launched into a diatribe against clerical celibacy. "When pedophiles come out of the Roman Catholic Church, does it cause you any surprise? This is a Church which has an unnatural policy of asking its clergy and its nuns to be asexual beings...that's a perverted posture..." He further elaborated when called by a listener who disagreed with him, "I'm not condemning anybody except the pedophiles and the policy of this organization which encourages pedophiles to become priests and to hide in the ranks of the clergy." He claimed that the Church knew its policy was perverted and that he would debate someone from the "anti-defamation Catholic organization" on this topic since he feared no

“contradiction.” For one final swipe, he said that the hierarchy wanted Catholic women “to launder the linens and arrange the flowers while they’re diddling their daughters.”

## **November 24**

**Pittsburgh, PA** – In a front cover story, senior editor Peter Benesh of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* wrote about the divorce controversy in Ireland: “The subtext of the emotion-laden debate is a brutal question: Should clerical pedophiles be allowed to dictate Irish family values?”

## **November 26**

**New York** – “Lives of the Super Saints” discussed supermodels as saints of a kind in the Style page of the *New York Times Magazine*. Bob Morris used religious imagery in writing about various models who had been written off, but whose careers still continued. He said that these women “still inspire a religious kind of awe.” He stated in giving his advice: “Like the Greeks...Roman Catholics have saints for nearly every occasion...Now, if cute people with dental issues could invoke Kate Moss, they might surely find inspiration in the legend of her ascension...Similarly, failed new movie stars could invoke Cindy Crawford giving St. Genesius...a break.”

## **November 29**

*Law & Order* featured a story about a devout Catholic mother who killed her baby. She pretended that, while she was in Confession, her child was stolen. As the show unfolded, it became known that this outwardly religious woman murdered her child. Her defense attorney urged a defense based on mental defect; however, the prosecutor demonstrated her sanity when he got her to admit she killed her daughter for a more mundane reason—she was crying. The league’s central objection to this show was that it depicted the devout characters as dysfunctional and all the dissidents as well-adjusted, thus promoting a negative stereotype of practicing Catholics who

are loyal to the Church.

#### **December 4**

In *The New Yorker* Ann Landers gave her opinion on many public figures including the Pope. She called His Holiness a “Polack” and added that the Polish people were “anti-women.”

#### **December 8**

*Picket Fences*’ episode caricatured Catholic teaching on marriage and sexuality. This episode featured a visit from the Holy Father to the show’s fictional town, Rome, Wisconsin. He saw a murder and was a witness at a trial of a gay man who killed his lover. The Pope underwent questions on such things as Church teaching on homosexuality. The Holy Father was presented as stupid, unable to answer the defense attorney’s questions. Thus, Catholic teachings were misrepresented and negative stereotypes of the Catholic view of sexuality were advanced.

#### **December 19**

Andrei Codrescu, a commentator for the tax supported National Public Radio (NPR), made the following comment in his *All Things Considered* broadcast: “The evaporation of four million [Christians] who believe in this crap would leave the world a better place.” Codrescu issued an apology for the tone, but not the substance, of the commentary.

#### **December 20**

**New York** – A program called *In the Life—Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell* appeared on PBS’ New York station, WNYC. In this program about homosexuals’ lives, the Catholic Church came under fire for many unsubstantiated reasons. A gay professor at the University of Notre Dame opined that the Church is uncomfortable about sexuality and “terrorized” by homosexuality.



**December 25**

**Green Bay, WI** – Gannett News Service issued a story about the Virgin Mary which the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* put in its Lifestyle section. In a column called “Booyah,” the story appeared in which Mary’s “ultimate crisis pregnancy” was discussed. “Bible interpreters resistant to the virgin birth story argue that either Mary and Joseph had normal sexual relations, or Mary was a victim of rape.”

**1995**

Texe Marrs sold a tape called “Satan 2000: The Unity of World Religions.” In this audio talk, Marrs claimed that the devil picked John Paul II for a mission. Among his charges against the Catholic Church were that the Church re-sacrifices Jesus in the Mass and that Catholics in bowing before a Marian shrine are worshipping her. He asserted, “Catholics worship Mary, who’s the form of a goddess.” He made many accusations about priests being gays and pedophiles; he stated that Vatican City has three Masonic lodges.

**1995**

Joan Osborne became a new singing sensation with a record called *Relish*. On the album were songs such as “St. Teresa” and “One of Us.” The former discussed drugs, prostitution, and the saint with lines like “Every stone a story like a Rosary.” The latter song wondered what if God were “one of us” and “just another slob.” Produced by PolyGram Records, Inc., the album also solicited donations for Rock For Choice and Planned Parenthood, among others.

**1995**

A group called Down put out an album called *Nola*, which featured a “Parental Advisory” for “Explicit Lyrics.” The album’s cover featured an image of a man, meant to resemble the face of Christ with a crown of thorns. Out of his mouth

was dangling a marijuana cigarette. Songs like "Hail the Leaf" and "Bury Me in Smoke" indicated the drug references that are rife in this work, and which have nothing to do with Jesus. It was distributed by Elektra Entertainment Group, which is a division of Warner Communications, Inc.