

MEDIA

MEDIA RESPONSE TO VATICAN INQUIRY OF LCWR



Once again, an internal matter of the Catholic Church became fodder for media voyeurs, pundits and talking heads when a number of dissident nuns became the subject of an apostolic visit, announced in April 2012. It was disturbing to read the way some of the Vatican's critics were trying to defend the indefensible. Only 3% of the 55,000 nuns in the U.S. actually belong to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR), a fact largely omitted by the secular press. Critics of Vatican efforts to reform the LCWR had their talking points down so well that everyone just assumed that the reform initiative was triggered by concerns over these nuns pushing for ObamaCare. All of them were wrong, and it is not a matter of opinion.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare) legislation wasn't introduced in the House until September 17, 2009. The decision to undertake a doctrinal assessment of the LCWR was announced on April 8, 2008, while George W. Bush was president. In other words, the narrative about "payback" was untrue: the timeline undercuts the critics' argument.

What follows is a selection of the most vitriolic comments:

Melinda Henneberger, *Washington Post*, April 19: "The Vatican, of course, knows a lot about scandal—to the point that the nuns are the only morally uncompromised leaders poor Holy Mother Church has left...Keep right on like this, your excellencies, and before you know it even more Catholics will be 'moving beyond the church.'"

Joan Vennoch, *Boston Globe*, April 22: "Pope Benedict XVI can't wait to crack down on 'radical feminist' nuns. But will he ever really crack down on protectors of pedophile priests?"

Monica Yant Kinney, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 22: “Surely, fallout from the international sex-abuse scandal represents a more grave concern than devout old ladies saying health care is a human right. Rome is burning from fires set by collared arsonists, but the Vatican takes aim at women without so much as a match?”

Jamie Manson, *National Catholic Reporter*, April 23: “Essentially, the hierarchy is reducing them to the equivalent of spiritual enslavement.”

Michele Somerville, *Huffington Post*, April 23: “The Vatican needs to flex its muscles. More urgent, still, is its need to push tales of Vatican corruption, child molestation and news of its colossal failure to convince Catholics to vote in accordance with the Magisterium off of what we once called ‘the front pages...’ The Vatican needs to create fresh fear.”

Joseph Ferullo, *National Catholic Reporter*, April 23: “Here’s some comfort I can offer American nuns: It’s not just you. If there is any theme that has formed around the statements and behavior of the Vatican and bishops in recent years, it’s this: Doctrinal purity is valued above all else. It doesn’t matter if lives are at stake or if doctrine flies in the face of tragic realities. It doesn’t matter if dark measures must be taken to sweep disquieting contradictions under the rug, tucked away in places that only courtrooms and lawyers can pull out into the light. Purity—or the appearance of it—is prime.”

Isabella Moyer, *National Catholic Reporter*, April 23: “Rightly or wrongly, the doctrinal assessment of the LCWR is being perceived by many as a bullying tactic from on high with little room for a spirit of mutual respect or collaboration... Clericalism and authoritarianism do not model mutual respect and collaboration and are no longer accepted by those who truly seek an adult church.”

Maureen Fiedler, *National Catholic Reporter*, April 24: “What this ridiculous statement does show is the overwhelming desire of these men to ‘regulate’ women and to put a stamp of approval on everything we say. This is ‘patriarchy’ in its worst form.”

Tom Roberts, *National Catholic Reporter*, April 24: “In the church, no greater challenge exists to hierarchical power and the traditional way of doing things than the sisters... Bishops’ authority everywhere is compromised, their moral stature diminished as the world keeps hearing through trial testimony and released documentation how the leadership culture of the Catholic church ignored the horror that was being done to children in order to protect their priests and the reputation of the clerical culture...The U.S. hierarchy is aiming its rage at the sisters, but the temblors moving the earth beneath their feet have little to do with women who serve the poor and dare to ask unsettling questions.”

Jim Wallis, *Huffington Post*, April 25: “Quite honestly, do most of us believe, or even most Catholics believe, that the bishops are the only ‘authentic teachers of faith and morals?’”

Mary Hunt, *Religion Dispatches*, April 25: “The truth is, most Catholics no longer look to Rome for guidance on our personal lives, or anyone else’s. Nor do we live within the narrow confines of a cultic Christianity, or, as women, accept male leadership and priestly ministry as if theirs were God-given and ours were not. We appreciate the complexity of these matters and strive to create forums in which to listen, discuss, discern, and pray...The question is how to stop the cycle of violence, how to refuse to cooperate in structures that oppress, how to ‘engage impasse’ as some of the most creative nuns have tried to do.”

Mark Morford, *SFGate.com*, April 25: “Funny how no one ever talks about the nuns. I suppose it makes sense. After all,

Catholic nuns are so rarely embroiled in sex scandals. They are never caught pants down in the rectory with a 10-year-old altar boy, teaching him of the 'mystical secretions' of the Lord. They never cost the church billions in litigious payouts for rape, abuse, millennia of pedophilic atrocity and shame. For that, you gotta look to the priests."

Steve and Cokie Roberts, *News Tribune*, April 27: "Really? Women religious in America will now have a bishop grading their morals? Shouldn't it be the other way around? Given the sex-abuse scandals – in which many Roman Catholic bishops looked the other way at best and moved child molesters from parish to parish, perpetrating evil, at worst – you would think that a ruler rap on the hierarchical knuckles would be in order."

Maureen Dowd, *New York Times*, April 28: "Even as Republicans try to wrestle women into chastity belts, the Vatican is trying to muzzle American nuns."

James Carroll, *Boston Globe*, April 30: "This month alone, the pope has rebuked the disobedience of European priests and, acting through a Vatican congregation, set in motion a severe disciplining of American nuns."

Books

October 2

Former Playboy playmate Jenny McCarthy's book, *Bad Habits*, was published; the cover featured her dressed as a nun holding rosary beads. After its publication, McCarthy was on "Access Hollywood," where she recounted a story from the book. She claimed that, when she was in Italy in 1995, a few "mafia" guys brought her to the pope's apartment (he was allegedly out of town) where she tried on some of his clothes. At the suggestion of her Jewish friends, she allegedly grabbed a crucifix as a souvenir for her mother. The Catholic League noted that 15 years ago McCarthy said she still thought of

herself as a Catholic, insisting that “I broke free from the chain of the pope.” Free at last, she opined, “The Catholic religion was making me feel a tad bit guilty for everything I was doing.”

Internet

January 25

In his column, sexpert Dan Savage wrote that when Newt Gingrich was married to his second wife, he was “still f***ing the consecrated host out of his ‘devout Catholic’ mistress.”

February 24

In a piece on Catholic presidential candidate Rick Santorum, Larry Doyle at Huffington Post went beyond the candidate to slam all Catholics for participating “in a barbaric ritual...a ‘mass’ in which a black-robed cleric casts a spell over some bread and wine...[resulting] in a cannibalistic reverie.”

March 7

In a Huffington Post article entitled “Imposing ‘Sharia’: Roman Catholic Version,” Rabbi Arthur Waskow compared the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to Muslims seeking to enforce sharia law. “During the last few weeks, we have seen an outrageous attempt to impose sharia law on the US government and the American public,” he wrote.

The following is a list of his comments:

- “The only threat to religious freedom was the attempt by the bishops to deny religious freedom to the employees of those institutions—Catholics and others—whose religious consciences are totally at peace with the use of contraception.”
- “The bishops are asserting that the only ‘Catholic’ consciences that count are those of—surprise!—the bishops! Not parishioners, not women, not the adults who as children were molested or raped by priests who were protected by the bishops.”
- “Those who brag that ‘The Church is not a democracy’ might

better ask themselves, 'Why not?' Indeed, in the early centuries of the Church the people of Rome and other cities took part in electing their bishops—in Rome, the Pope. Time to renew the tradition, and not just in Rome?"

March 19 & 26

Washington, D.C. – Washington Archbishop Donald Cardinal Wuerl was attacked by Catholic writer George Neumayr in two pieces that were posted on the website of *The American Spectator*. The first one did not receive much attention. But then Neumayr struck again in response to a complaint registered by Wuerl's communications director.

Neumayr alleged that a priest in Cardinal Wuerl's archdiocese was put on leave for denying communion to a lesbian at a funeral mass. His version was contested by the Washington Archdiocese: what led to the sanctions were "credible allegations" regarding the priest's "intimidating behavior toward parish staff and others."

Neumayr said Wuerl is one of those "cufflinked cardinals" who "worry not about punishment in the next world but slights in this one"; their goal, he says, is to curry favor with the "Pretty People." Worse, he had the audacity to put the cardinal on notice, exclaiming that "Wuerl can only earn the red of his rich robes through a willingness to endure the blood of Jesus Christ's martyrdom." Neumayr was not above wallowing in the dirt: he referred to the Washington archbishop as "Wuerl the girl."

Cardinal Wuerl's communications director made a formal complaint with Neumayr's editors. In response, he wrote a second article in which he became unhinged, charging that Cardinal Wuerl "exposed the Holy Eucharist to sacrilege."

March 28

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend posted an article on the website of *The Atlantic* about how she spent her St. Patrick's Day at a

conference attended by homosexuals, lesbians, and “transgender” men/women. Without citing a single example, she asserted that the Catholic Church’s teachings “encourage bigotry and harm.” She also claimed that the conference was put on by a Catholic organization called New Ways Ministry. There is no Catholic group by that name (on St. Patrick’s Day in 2011 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reaffirmed that New Ways Ministry is not a Catholic organization). Finally, even though the Catholic Church has no female priests, she claimed that two female priests gave her a special blessing at the conference.

April 7

On Holy Saturday, CNN’s Belief Blog website featured a post called “The Jesus Debate: Man vs. Myth.” It was a classic example of religious profiling that subjected the reality of Jesus to scrutiny in the guise of historical analysis. No one objects to legitimate historical analysis. What is objectionable, however, is the pretence of objectivity when anti-Christian animus poses as hard science.

April 12

Sarah Posner’s article, “Bishops Release Religious Liberty Manifesto Vowing Disobedience to ‘Unjust Laws,’” appeared on the Religion Dispatches website. She attacked the bishops’ “Statement on Religious Liberty” as “even more pointed and hostile than previous statements.” She said the statement expressed “disdain for (and even a refusal to acknowledge) court rulings against the Bishops.” She referred to “the phony religious freedom wars” and looked forward to the “summer of the Bishops’ content.”

April 13

The “LGBT” blog of ThinkProgress, associated with the Center for American Progress, attacked a statement on religious liberty by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, saying that the Catholic Church wants to “impose its public services” on the public and accusing the hierarchy of caring

about “its own dominance over society.”

April 16

When Pope Benedict XVI called for “radical obedience” to the Magisterium during Holy Week, writer Michele Somerville responded in the Huffington Post defending Catholic dissidents. In a piece called “Radical Disobedience: Why Roman Catholics Won’t Heed the Pontiff’s Call for Radical Obedience,” she attacked the Church’s hierarchy for upholding doctrine on matters like marriage, homosexuality, abortion, and birth control. She fantasized about the Vatican’s loss of “credibility.”

April 17

The Daily Caller exposed Media Matters for America’s targeting of Christianity, with the goal of silencing the Christian voice.

It uncovered that, in 2004, Media Matters leader, David Brock, made clear his goals when he applied to the IRS for a tax-exempt status. “It is common for news and commentary by the press to present viewpoints that tend to overly promote corporate interests, the rights of the wealthy, and a conservative Christian-influenced ideology,” the application said.

Anyone who has followed the history of Media Matters knows that it has evolved into something far more extreme than what its founding statement said. To be frank, it is one thing for left-wing activists to promote a radical agenda, quite another to finger a world religion for monitoring.

April 24

In the *Washington Post*’s “On Faith” blog, Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo raised the question, “Is the Church Corrupt?” The answer implied the worst. He ended by saying, “Catholics are loyal enough to Jesus and to each other to prevail against the Gates of Hell that now besmirch the institutional church.” We

made the point that it would then logically follow that they are no longer Catholic.

Sally Quinn, the blog's moderator, contributed another rap, entitled, "A Catholic 'War on Women.'" She began with this insight: "The Roman Catholic Church is a hierarchical institution if there ever was one." Then she accused the Vatican of "condemning nuns, including those among the 55,000 members of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)." But the Vatican condemned no one and only 3% of nuns belong to the LCWR.

June 5

A post on Gawker.com carried the title "The Catholic Church Should Not Expect to Be Taken Seriously," and attacked the Vatican for censuring Sister Margaret Farley on the publication of her book *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*. The post was an obscene rant claiming that she was censured because it was a "a book that did *not* say that your sexual urges are nothing more than the shameful pangs of demon penises f***ing your soul which should be repressed and repressed and repressed until you are absolutely *warped*, underneath that church outfit. Burn the witch! Ahh, apparently we don't do that any more? Well... censure the witch!" [Italics in original]. The writer referred to leaders of the Church as "holy relics." He accused the hierarchy of saying something "so patently stupid, backwards, hateful, discriminatory, and downright unrealistic that any 13 year-old can tell you that you've removed yourself from the sphere of reasonable discussion." The article ended with "Go f*** yourself, The Vatican. It might make you feel better."

August 6

A Salon.com article by Joan Walsh contained an attack on the U.S. bishops, suggesting that they are a "military group" as well as an "unregistered arm of the GOP."

August 13

A lexicographical website, Wordsmith.org, engaged in anti-Catholic bigotry: "Latin is the preferred language of the Vatican, but don't hold it against the language. It had no say in the matter. A language never hurt little kids, if you don't count all the schoolchildren who had to memorize all those 'amo amas amat' conjugations."

November 26

The website, AlterNet, published an article entitled "50 Reasons to Boycott the Catholic Church." The author's main gripe was that "the church isn't a democracy" and that "progressives have no voice or vote in its governance." Therefore, he advocated a boycott of the "institutional church and its abhorrent mission," adducing 50 reasons which he felt proved his point.

December 13

In an online article called, "Rare Pornographic Movie Shot at Vatican For First Time Since 1982s 'Pope Fisters IV,'" *The Onion* crossed the line between irreverent satire and vicious anti-Catholicism. The article elaborated at length about a "new hardcore pornographic movie being shot at the Sistine Chapel" and used pornographic terms to mock such things as First Communion, the Holy Eucharist, the Immaculate Conception, and Pope Benedict XVI's name.

Magazines

March 26

An article by Joel Mathis posted on the *Philadelphia* magazine blog site was a blatant attempt to silence Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput. Mathis isn't Catholic, but that did not stop him from giving some advice to Archbishop Chaput: just tend to the problems in the archdiocese and drop your criticisms of the Obama administration. Mathis was angry that Chaput had a new e-book, *A Heart on Fire: Catholic Witness and the Next America*, which addressed recent attacks on religious liberty. Mathis counseled Chaput to "concentrate on fixing the

Catholic Church in Philadelphia,” adding that the archbishop’s alleged “anti-Obama crusade” amounted to “a distraction.”

Movies

April 13

“The Three Stooges” opened in theatres nationwide. The Stooges were depicted seeking to raise money for their orphanage run by habit-wearing, stereotypical nuns. One of the sisters was played by swimsuit model Kate Upton, who was shown wearing a “nun bikini” with a large rosary around her neck. Another nun, Sister Mary-Mengele, named after the Nazi war criminal, was played by Seinfeld creator Larry David. On his own show in 2009, David splattered urine on a picture of Jesus in a Catholic home.

According to one AP movie critic, the directors “never wanted to tinker with the Stooges.” The *New York Times* agreed, saying the brothers “strove for absolute fidelity to the original.” CBS News also cited their “loyalty to the subject.”

The slapstick was there, but the TV show never mocked nuns. The film did.

May 4

“The Perfect Family” opened in 13 theaters nationwide, eight of which were in California. The movie portrayed Hollywood’s idea of a Catholic family: a neurotic devout Catholic wife, played by Kathleen Turner, married to an alcoholic; her pregnant lesbian daughter who wants to “marry” her girlfriend; and her adulterous lout of a son.

Turner is a left-wing atheist who serves on the board of directors of the Christian-bashing People for the American Way. She said her character tries to show the conflict between being a practicing Catholic and seeking to “live in the real world.” Movieline.com agreed, saying she plays “a religious dinosaur roaming a modern world.” Though the movie was riddled with intolerance toward Catholicism, Turner said, “I would

hope tolerance" is the message that comes through. *Variety* concurred, adding that the film preaches "tolerance toward gays" (but not toward Catholics).

It is a staple of anti-Catholicism to say that Catholics are not independent thinkers. Predictably, Turner's character admits, "I'm Catholic. I don't need to think." However, not all family members are stupid. Shockya.com noted that the pregnant lesbian daughter embodies "independent thinking and modern beliefs."

When asked about the portrayal of Catholicism, Turner said, "I thought we were pretty nice." The executive producer, Connie Cummings, agreed: "We didn't want to take cheap shots or villainise anyone." Rex Reed takes a different approach, saying, "The movie is almost guaranteed to offend the humorless."

September 8

Venice, Italy –The Venice Film Festival awarded a special jury prize to "Paradise: Faith." In the film, a "devout" Catholic woman is shown masturbating with a crucifix. The movie begins with the woman whipping herself topless before a crucifix. She is shown walking around the house on her knees praying. She also likes to go door to door carrying a two-foot high statue of the Virgin Mary; this is her way of getting new converts. The film is part of a trilogy; Strand Releasing acquired the U.S. rights and planned to release it early in 2013.

November 28

New York, NY – At the prestigious Film Forum, a showing of the documentary, "Mea Maxima Culpa," by director Alex Gibney was used by Margaret Markey to push her sex abuse reform law, which exempts public schools. She was joined by Marci Hamilton, a Cardozo School of Law professor who has singled out the Catholic Church in her work for the professional victims' lobby.

Gibney's documentary was mere propaganda purporting to establish a "direct connection of the Vatican" to the homosexual abuse scandal.

Much of the movie focused on Father Lawrence Murphy, a serial abuser from Wisconsin. Gibney's propaganda omitted inconvenient facts: the crimes against Murphy extend to the 1950s; the civil authorities were not asked to investigate until the mid-1970s; following the probe, the case was dropped; the Vatican wasn't notified until 1996 (it could have ignored the case because the statute of limitations had expired); a trial was ordered; the priest who presided over the case between 1996-1998 has said that in all the meetings he had in the U.S. and in Rome, "at no time...was Cardinal Ratzinger's name ever mentioned."

One review of the movie said, "All the reports of sex abuse in the church since the 1960's went directly to the current pope, Benedict XVI, to the time when he was Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger." There was no central command center until 2001 when Ratzinger took over, which is when things really began to change—just the opposite of what Gibney would have us believe.

Music

February 12

Los Angeles, CA – During her performance at the Grammy Awards, pop star Nicki Minaj trashed the Catholic faith. As a prelude to her act, she appeared on the red carpet with a man dressed like the pope. Her performance began on stage with a mock confessional skit that was followed by a taped video depicting a mock exorcism. With stained glass in the background, she appeared on stage again with choir boys and monks dancing.

Perhaps the most vulgar part was the sexual statement that showed a scantily clad female dancer stretching backwards while an altar boy knelt between her legs in prayer. Finally, "Come All Ye Faithful" was sung while a man posing as a bishop

walked on stage; Minaj was shown levitating.

None of this was by accident, and all of it was approved by The Recording Academy, which puts on the Grammys. The Catholic League took The Recording Academy to task for its irresponsibility and selective tolerance, and our protest of this obscene assault was picked up by media outlets from the *New York Times* to the *Times of India*.

March 23

Madonna's new CD, *MDNA* was released. It embraced moral dissolution and bashed Catholicism.

The video for the song, "Girl Gone Wild," showed the 53-year-old tramping around in black hot pants and stiletto heels while gyrating with well-greased topless guys adorned in tight black pants. The homoerotic show was so vulgar that YouTube said the video was not fit for those under the age of 18. YouTube even asked Madonna to recut a more appropriate video for teenagers.

"Girl Gone Wild" began with Madonna reciting the first few lines of "The Act of Contrition." (Indeed, it was no accident that this song, and the album, were released during Lent.) She then pranced around to the backdrop of a light-show configured to resemble a cross. A man who was shown wearing a Crown of Thorns was no doubt meant as another swipe at Christianity.

The album also featured "I'm a Sinner." With lyrics such as "I'm a sinner, I like it that way," Madonna made it clear that she always has Catholicism on her mind. "Hail Mary full of grace" was followed by a quip about Jesus, St. Christopher and St. Anthony.

Madonna admitted that *MDNA* was chosen to reference both her name and the drug MDMA; the line from "I'm a Sinner" about "magic dust" was used to refer to the PCP drug by that name.

July 16

In Madonna's video that accompanied the song, "Nobody Knows Me," French National Front party leader Marine Le Pen was shown sporting a swastika on her head. After the video was played during Madonna's performance in Paris, the National Front said it was going to sue her. In fact, Madonna bowed to pressure by changing the swastika to a question mark. Madonna's vile attack on Pope Benedict XVI, however, did not attract much media attention, which explains why it went unchanged.

The full video of "Nobody Knows Me," which was part of Madonna's *MDNA* Tour, was replete with religious symbolism. The most offensive part for Catholics occurred when anti-gay protesters were shown just before Madonna's face morphs into that of Pope Benedict XVI; at the point where the pope's face appeared, protesters holding gay-bashing signs were shown on both sides of him. The accompanying lyrics, which included the refrain, "Won't let a stranger give me a social disease," tied the pope to hate speech directed at homosexuals. Moreover, photos of gay youths who committed suicide were also shown during this sequence.

What was particularly sick about this attack was that the protesters were not only not Catholic, they were anti-Catholic members of the Westboro Baptist Church. To demonstrate how relentlessly anti-Catholic these people are, they were going to picket St. Joseph Catholic Church in Shawnee, Kansas on July 22: the church was called a "whorehouse" and the priests were labeled "rapists."

Madonna not only libeled the pope, she attributed to Catholicism the hate speech of those who hate Catholics, as well as homosexuals. That the media gave scant coverage to this part of her bigoted performance was also disturbing.

August 27

Comic, singer, and actor Harry Shearer released a new album, "Can't take a hint." One of the songs was called "Deaf Boys,"

which was recorded two years earlier. The song takes as its subject a serial abuser from Wisconsin, Father Lawrence Murphy, as if he were singing. The video is shot inside a church and exploits Catholic iconography, including images of priests, bishops, and cardinals showing only the lower half of their faces as they are singing and without faces while clapping. Here is a sampling of the lyrics: "Deaf boys, can't hear me comin' / Deaf boys, got me hymin' and hummin' / A shepherd with a closet full of toys / Let's hear it for those deaf boys."

Newspapers

January 5

The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* ran an editorial sympathizing with the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and called on Catholics to rebel against St. Louis Archbishop Robert Carlson by refusing to put money in the collection basket. It also called Judge Ann Mesle, who ordered SNAP to hand over internal documents, "a minister's daughter." This was clearly a term of disapprobation, as no one would ever dare to ask how many reporters at the paper were raised by committed atheists, had a liberal rabbi as a father, or were born to an unwed mother.

January 11-17

SF Weekly featured an attack piece on Mother Teresa called "Tainted Saint," which was given front-page prominence together with a picture of Mother Teresa and the caption, "New evidence suggests Mother Teresa told church officials to overlook a sex abuse allegation against her favorite Bay Area priest." The magazine claimed to have obtained documents supporting its case, but none was even barely credible.

February 10

A Tony Auth cartoon in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* presented a caricature of the lawyers for Monsignor William Lynn, who was facing trial at the time on charges of child endangerment and

conspiracy. The caricature said, "The trial judge says anyone who doubts there was widespread child abuse in the Catholic Church is living on a different planet. Outrageous!!" In the next frame, a bishop is shown in outer space. He is standing on a moon marked "denial" above the planet Earth.

February 12

A Signe Wilkinson cartoon in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* depicted a group of bishops and a group of women, one of which held a sign that read "Catholic Women (who mostly use contraceptives)." The bishops say, "Our medical facilities shouldn't have to cover birth control!" The women say, "Ours should!" The cartoon portrayed the Catholic hierarchy's opposition to the Health and Human Services contraception mandate on the ground of religious liberty as not just a "war on women," but a "war on Catholic women." The cartoon dishonestly omitted the fact that, when polled on the question of contraceptive coverage at the cost of religious liberty, a greater percentage of women polled in favor of religious liberty.

February 14

Highlands Today ran a Gabe Closten cartoon depicting the hands of a priest holding above the cup of the Chalice not the consecrated Host, but a dispenser for birth control pills.

February 14

A Joe Heller cartoon ran in the *Frederick News-Post*. In the background, it depicted a crowd of people behind the phrase "Majority of U.S. Catholics use birth control." In the foreground, President Obama is shown holding a document that reads "change in gov't health care policy on contraception." A bishop standing next to Obama has his arm around Obama's shoulder and tells Obama: "See? Compromise is good...The last thing you want is everyone ignoring your rules!" This was a blatant attack on the Catholic hierarchy.

February 16

A Mike Luckovich cartoon in the *New Haven Register* depicted a priest telling congregants, "Parishioners, the government wants our hospitals and universities to cover contraceptives in their health care plans!" In the next frame he says, "That wasn't supposed to be an applause line." The cartoon was an attack on the parish letters on the threat to religious liberty posed by the Health and Human Services abortifacient mandate that was read to congregants across the country in January. It suggested that Catholics welcomed the mandate and portrayed Catholic opposition to the mandate as a phenomenon of the bishops.

February 16

The Portland Press Herald ran a Clay Bennett cartoon depicting a fully armored knight ineptly raising a medieval flail only to have the spiked ball at the end of the chain crush him square on the helmet. On his shield were the words "culture war." His tunic resembled those worn by crusaders, except the red cross was emblazoned with the letters "GOP." The cartoon was an amalgam of clichés suggesting that the Catholic Church is waging a self-defeating crusade-style "culture war" through the GOP.

February 16

The *Lanconia Daily Sun* ran a Mike Luckovich cartoon in which an elephant lawmaker in a suit, symbolizing the Republican Party, says "I'm taking a well-deserved break from job creation...." He was depicted playing monkey-in-the-middle with a bishop. A woman is in the middle, being kept from "birth control," which is being tossed over her head. The cartoon implied that the Catholic Church was conspiring with the Republican Party to keep access to birth control from women.

February 16

A Paul Laud cartoon in the *Caldwell Progress* depicted a birth control dispenser being broken in the hands of a priest as if it were the Host. The cartoon contained the following limerick: "The Constitution and lots of prayer helped bishops

squash a terrible scare. / But it's over, Amen. / The flock safe again, / from family planning and pre-natal care." This was yet another cartoon attacking Catholics as a result of the Health and Human Services abortifacient mandate.

February 17

A cartoon entitled "Santorum Discovers the New World" appeared in the *Salt Lake Tribune* and attacked presidential candidate Rick Santorum for his Catholicism. A man caricatured in a missionary robe labeled "Santorum" stands next to a woman labeled "21st Century." He is holding a document marked "Women's Issues," turning his head in repugnance at the sight. He exclaims: "Ugh! Naked savage!" This cartoon exploited the "war on women" narrative advocated by radical feminists and their "liberated" cohorts in the media.

February 19

A Taylor Jones cartoon in the *Staten Island Advance* depicted Uncle Sam saying the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. This cartoon suggested that the support for the U.S. bishops' fight for religious liberty compromised loyalty to America.

February 20

The *Frederick News-Post* ran a David Fitzsimmons cartoon vilifying the bishops for defending the First Amendment rights of Catholics. In the first frame of the cartoon, a caricatured bishop is shown "huffing" about the position that "hospitals and universities should not be asked to include contraceptives in their employee's health plans." In the next frame, he then says, "We believe in the principle of separation of church and state." In the third frame, he adds, "And the principle of church and reality." In the last frame, the cartoonish bishop is shown reading a newspaper with the headline, "98% of Catholic Women Use Contraceptives."

February 20

The *Philadelphia Daily News* ran a Joel Pett cartoon in which,

in one frame, a bishop tells a mother with a baby and young child, "You can take your immoral, evil desire for birth control somewhere else!" In the frame underneath, as mother and children are walking away, the bishop adds, "Adorable boy, by the way..." This was a swipe at all priests as child abusers.

February 20

A Jim Morin cartoon in *USA Today* depicted Rick Santorum, who was campaigning for president at the time, in the same bed with a couple and a bishop. The bishop says, "Mr. Santorum and I are here to make sure the government doesn't interfere with your lives..."

February 21

The *Portland Press Herald* ran a R.J. Matson cartoon depicting the confessional from the outside. In a conversation bubble, the penitent says to the priest, "Bless me father for I have health insurance that pays for contraceptives..."

February 21

The Universal Press Syndicate issued a Pat Oliphant cartoon attacking the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform February 16 hearing entitled "Lines Crossed: Separation of Church and State. Has the Obama Administration Trampled on Freedom of Religion and Freedom of Conscience?" The panel featured eminent religious leaders from various faiths, including then-Bishop of Bridgeport William Lori.

In the cartoon, a woman faces a panel of experts, all male clergy, including a rabbi, a bishop, and a priest. She points indignantly at a sign saying "Reform Committee on Contraception – No Women Please." The priest replies, "I'm sorry, my dear. But contraception is far too important a matter to be left to women." In a corner of the cartoon, two small figures have a conversation. One says, "What would Jesus say?" The other says, "Verily, it taketh two to tango." The cartoon also ran in the *Lexington Herald-Leader* on February 25.

February 25

The *Times-Reporter* ran an Ed Stein cartoon in which Rick Santorum, in papal regalia, is being sworn into the Office of the President of the United States. The cartoon attacked Santorum for his Catholicism.

March 1-7

The *Monterey County Weekly* carried an elaborate Tom Tomorrow cartoon that depicted the bishops in alliance with conservative pundits as waging a “war on women.” The Catholic resistance to the Health and Human Services abortifacient mandate was depicted in the most vile anti-Catholic terms. In the cartoon, one bishop says, “The pursuit of the orgasm leads women to have sex—which leads to abortions!” Another bishop continues, “And that’s why the female orgasm is a violation of our religious liberty!”

March 13

Following the Freedom From Religion Foundation’s (FFRF) anti-Catholic ad in the *New York Times* [see Activists, March 9], anti-Islamist activist Pamela Geller decided to submit an ad to the *Times* that played off FFRF by changing the wording to make it look like an attack on Islam. For example, she asked Muslims to quit their religion because they oppress so many people.

The *Times* rejected the ad with the excuse that “the fallout from running this ad now could put U.S. troops and/or civilians in the [Afghan] region in danger.”

The *Times*’ rationale for denying Geller’s ad was sound: we are opposed to unnecessarily putting our armed forces in harm’s way. But we wondered why it took fear to impel the *New York Times* not to run bigoted ads. Wouldn’t ethics suffice? It certainly wasn’t enough when they decided to run the FFRF ad assaulting Catholic sensibilities.

April 16

The *Indianapolis Star* ran a story about Maria Thornton McClain, a 71-year old former nun who had declared herself to be a priest. This Father Maria hoax was featured on page 1 of the B Section; the website featured 17 pictures of her and her fans. "The Roman Catholic Church does not recognize the ordination of women, but more and more women are answering the call as part of a reform movement," the paper said. A spokesman for CORPUS, a group that actually thinks Maria is a priest, was quoted as saying "we have to stand up for inclusivity."

April 29

The *Minneapolis Star Tribune* ran a Steve Sack cartoon in which a caricature of Pope Benedict XVI says to a cartoonish figure in habit labeled "U.S. Nuns," "I'm very upset with you for not speaking out against homosexuality!" In the next panel, the pope says to a caricature of Jesus, "Same goes for your friend."

May 7

In an editorial called "More Time for Justice," the *New York Times* criticized New York Archbishop Timothy Cardinal Dolan for opposing legislation by New York Assemblywoman Margaret Markey which would lift the statute of limitations for one year on civil lawsuits involving the sexual abuse of a minor. The *Times* opined: "Cardinal Timothy Dolan has made defeating statute of limitations reform one of his top legislative priorities." It also attacked the Church more generally when it said that the Church "had been working hard to defeat statute of limitations reform across the country." The editorial also insinuated that opposition to the campaign to abolish the statute of limitations suggested an acknowledgement of guilt rather than a prudent requirement of law.

May 7

In an editorial called "The Passivity of the Catholic Church," the *Washington Post* pretended that the Survivors Network of

those Abused by Priests (SNAP) is a legitimate organization that “has championed the victims of pedophile priests” and that is being harassed by the Church. The editorial concluded that, “While Catholic leaders insist they have turned the tide against clerical sexual abuse, the church’s behavior suggests that its default is to protect the abusers and their supervisors who turned a blind eye. Until that changes, the church’s promises of zero tolerance will remain an illusion.”

May 8

The *National Catholic Reporter* ran an editorial with the following comment against the Vatican and bishops in response to the Vatican investigation into the Leadership Conference of Women Religious: “This is the latest episode of episcopal flailing about in a search for enemies anywhere and everywhere to explain how so much has escaped their control. This isn’t about authentic teaching and orthodoxy. This is about thought control and censorship.” In other words, the *National Catholic Reporter* regarded the hierarchy as no better than the totalitarian monsters who have ruled in communist and fascist nations. This assault represented a new low.

May 16

In an editorial entitled, “Georgetown gets it right on invitation to Kathleen Sebelius,” the *Washington Post* found it “shocking” that the Archbishop of Washington Donald Cardinal Wuerl found it “shocking” that the president of Georgetown University stood by the decision to invite Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to speak at a commencement ceremony in light of the HHS abortifacient mandate. In particular, the paper opined that, “What we find shocking is Cardinal Donald Wuerl’s failure to credit the proper role of a university and the importance of vigorous, open debate, even—or perhaps especially—involving matters of intense controversy and religious disagreement.” By framing the invitation as a way of facilitating the “exchange of ideas” proper to a university setting, the newspaper

arrogantly attempted to portray the cardinal's opposition as close-minded and out of place, when in fact it was a reasonable defense of the school's Catholic identity.

May 18

In an editorial entitled, "Silencing Kathleen Sebelius," the *Los Angeles Times* attacked the Archdiocese of Washington D.C. for criticizing Georgetown University's decision to invite Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to speak at a commencement ceremony. In particular, the paper accused Washington Archbishop Donald Cardinal Wuerl of "censorship" for speaking out against Georgetown's embrace of abortion champion Kathleen Sebelius.

May 19

New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd accused Archbishop of Washington Donald Cardinal Wuerl of "dogmatic censorship" for opposing Georgetown University's invitation of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to speak at a commencement ceremony. The entire article was malicious in its attempt to portray the Church as a coercive institution: "Absolute intolerance is always a sign of uncertainty and panic. Why do you have to hunt down everyone unless you're weak? The church doesn't seem to care if its members' beliefs are based on faith or fear, conviction or coercion. But what is the quality of a belief that exists simply because it's enforced?"

May 22

New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd attacked the bishops in her article, "Father Doesn't Know Best." She wrote the following regarding the U.S. bishops' opposition to the Health and Human Services abortifacient mandate:

"The church insists it's an argument about religious freedom, not birth control. But, really, it's about birth control, and women's lower caste in the church. It's about conservative bishops targeting Democratic candidates who support

contraception and abortion rights as a matter of public policy. And it's about a church that is obsessed with sex in ways it shouldn't be, and not obsessed with sex in ways it should be. The bishops and the Vatican care passionately about putting women in chastity belts."

May 24

A *New York Times* syndicated cartoon by Jeff Danziger appeared in the *Huffington Post*. The cartoon depicted a Catholic pontiff next to a Muslim imam. The prelate says, "Religious leaders must be free to decide what women can do with their bodies." The imam replies, "Great wisdom...inshallah [Arabic for God willing]." The cartoon also appeared in the *Albany Times-Union*.

May 27

The *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* ran a cartoon by Mike Luckovich. Entitled "Confession," it depicts a priest "confessing" to a woman on the other side of the confessional that, "the contraception debate's about controlling you." The cartoon also appeared in the *New London Day* on June 6.

June 8

The *Boston Herald* ran a Jerry Holbert cartoon entitled "Ninja Nuns." In the background a nun is shown in habit, with a ruler in one hand and a ninja-like covering on her face. Two bishops are shown in a state of alarm. One says: "The nuns have gone rogue!! We trained them, and now they are turning on us!" The other says: "Ow! Someone just hit my hand with a ruler!" The bottom of the cartoon reads: "Vatican to crack down on American nuns."

June 16

The *Seattle Times* ran a Chan Lowe cartoon in which a bishop and a nun are shown having a conversation. The bishop holds a newspaper with the headline, "U.S. Bishops' Contraceptive Fight." The bishop says, "Our fundamental concern isn't politics, but the protection of religious liberty..." The nun

says, "Excuse me, your excellency..." The bishop replies, "Put a sock in it, sister."

June 17

The New York *Daily News* ran Rick Stromoski's "Soup to Nutz" cartoon in which a character reads a book called "Lies my father told me." In one panel, the cartoon implies that one of the lies is, "Don't question the Pope...he's infallible."

June 27

The *Portland Daily Sun* ran a Stuart Carlson cartoon showing cardinals following the pope. Each figure holds a stack of paper with one of the following signs: "U.S. nuns," "sex abuse," "butler scandal," and "bank scandals." Another cardinal is labeled "contraceptives." The pope asks: "What would Jesus do?" One of the cardinals says: "It's obvious—hire a new P.R. guy!"

June 28

The *Valley Advocate* ran a vicious Tom Pappalardo cartoon entitled "And also with you" with the sub-heading "Variations on a Theme," in which a priest is shown holding the consecrated Host. A young man wearing a backwards baseball cap and earphones has his hand out and says the following:

- "I'll stop with the pedophile jokes when you get WIFI up in this beeyotch."
- "I always wondered where recycled styrofoam went."
- "...Is it true that Jesus' foreskin is hidden in the basement of the Vatican next to the Holy Spear of Longinus?"
- "...wait, whoa! Body and blood of who??"
- "...believe me, Padre. If I had my way, there'd be carvings of half-naked dead men crucified to each and every dang telephone pole in America."
- "...this is the smallest megachurch I've ever been to."
- "...you gonna finish that pimp cup o'wine, playa?"

July 26

Boston, MA – After a bill was passed by voice vote in the Massachusetts House expanding the time period on civil claims of child sexual abuse [see Government, July 25], an editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* called for Pennsylvania lawmakers to allow a two-year window for filing civil lawsuits in such cases. The bill that was passed did nothing about child sexual abuse that occurs in the public schools and applied exclusively to private institutions, such as the Catholic Church. The editorial said absolutely nothing about blanketing the public sector; unless a bill specifically targets the sovereign immunity status of the public schools, they remain exempt.

August 5

The *Washington Post* ran a review of two movies that addressed “the highly controversial ACT UP protest” at New York’s St. Patrick’s Cathedral in 1989, noting that “the hostility directed at the group after disrupting a religious service is now seen in a broader more sympathetic historical perspective.” Such sympathy is not only a disgrace, it is a veil for a virulent anti-Catholicism. The reviewer had no intention of reminding readers of what actually happened at St. Patrick’s: The activists disrupted Mass, chained themselves to the pews, interfered with Communion and spit the Host on the floor. Bill Donohue contacted the author Philip Kennicott, remarking that, “In other words, they acted like Nazis who stormed synagogues.”

October 1-17

On October 17, FX premiered the first episode of the series, “American Horror Story: Asylum.” It depicted an evil Catholic home for the criminally insane where a promiscuous nun—in habit, of course—beats inmates; a Catholic doctor tortures them. When the Catholic League submitted a full-page ad to be run that was critical of the show on October 1, it was turned down by The Hollywood Reporter’s publisher, Lynne Segall, who responded by saying the ad “was not appropriate.” She did not

say the show “was not appropriate.” After being rejected by *The Hollywood Reporter*, the Catholic League submitted the ad to *Variety* on October 2 where it met the same fate, this time because of the alleged “mudslinging” title, “FX Trashes Nuns.” No one at *Variety* said the show was guilty of “mudslinging.” For the text of the ad that was rejected, please [click [here](#)].

The Catholic League refused to amend its ad and took to the radio waves in Los Angeles to expose the Hollywood censors. On Monday, October 15, radio stations KFI and KTLK ran the following ad: “I’m Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League. On Wednesday, the first episode of FX’s ‘American Horror Story: Asylum,’ will air. The entire series portrays an evil Catholic home for the criminally insane where inmates are beaten and tortured by nuns and doctors. I recently sought to place an ad critical of the show in *The Hollywood Reporter* and *Variety*, but was turned down by both because of the ad’s content. In other words, not only does Hollywood delight in bashing Catholicism, it seeks to censor objections to it.”

October 19

The *South Florida Sun-Sentinel* ran a Chan Lowe cartoon called “The Boy Scouts scandal,” with the caption, “A boy scout leader goes to confession.” The cartoon used the revelation of sex abuse in the Boy Scouts to attack the Church. The drawing shows the closed confessional with a speech bubble on one side saying, “Bless me, Father, for I have sinned.” Another speech bubble in response reads: “Believe me...I can relate.”

November 1

The weekly *Miami Sun Post* ran an opinion piece by Charles Branham-Bailey attacking Miami Archbishop Thomas Wenski for issuing guidelines on how to vote. The article was called: “Can He Say That? Wenski the Buttinski: Archbishop Signals (Wink-Wink, Nod-Nod) Woe to Any Catholic Who Strays From the Flock.” The article attacked Wenski’s First Amendment rights, implying that he had no right to speak out on the complex moral issues that underlie public policy positions.

The article also attacked the Archbishop for upholding Church teaching on the common good and the human person: "That from a guy who is forbidden to engage in sexual relations, and who belongs to a profession all too many of whose members have scandalized their Church for decades thanks to their inability to keep their pants zipped up and their private parts unexposed when around children."

November 1

The cover of the weekly *Miami New Times* featured on its cover a picture of Jesus Christ with Mickey Mouse ears with the question, "How would Jesus vote?" The cover was meant to accompany its feature article on the fight for votes in the I-4 corridor that cuts through central Florida. The following week, the paper ran two letters taking offense at the cover and apologized for any offense the cover caused.

December 6

The *Kansas City Star* ran a Mike Judge cartoon in which news of Pope Benedict XVI tweeting for the first time was used to bash the Catholic Church. At the top of the cartoon is a question: "Why did the man with archaic views on women, gays, birth control, sex, marriage, health care and child molestation open a Twitter account?" Underneath was an image of the pope caricatured to look like a dimwit with the words: "He wants to keep up with the times."

December 6

The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* ran a Rob Rogers cartoon in which news of the pope tweeting for the first time was used to bash the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI is shown tweeting on his smart phone the words: "OMG!! This 21st century technology is great for spreading my 15th century views on gays, women and contraception! LOL #say10hailmarys"

Radio

March 17

The National Public Radio weekend game show "Wait! Wait! Don't Tell me!" included attacks on Pope Benedict XVI, calling him "another famous gay icon." Using the news that the pope would receive his own cologne, the host envisioned a "pope product empire," including jeans ("nothing gets between me and my Benedicts") and cereal ("let's give this cereal to Popey, Popey condemns everything").

April 12

On his nationally syndicated radio show, Mike Malloy went on a tirade against Bill Donohue, whom he called "that piece of human waste" and "the fascist Bill Donohue Catholic Nazi." He also called Catholics "child-raping sons of bitches" and referred to "your scum, the Nazi Pope."

May 27

The web version of Barbara Bradley Hagerty's story, entitled "Just Doing His Job Is Catholic Official's Defense," was posted on the website of National Public Radio (NPR). It began: "A clergy sex-abuse trial in is [sic] reaching a crescendo in a Philadelphia courtroom. One defendant is James Brennan, a priest accused of trying to rape a minor, *which is not that unusual.*" [Emphasis added.]

In this day and age when it is considered taboo to make sweeping generalizations of a negative sort about so many demographic groups, it was astonishing that NPR allowed this bigoted swipe at Catholic priests.

The Catholic League asked NPR to respond to our complaint, which the ombudsman, Edward Schumacher-Matos, addressed in a separate posting on the NPR website. He claimed that Hagerty had contacted him "even before" we issued our statement and that "a number of other listener complaints came pouring in" to him. He claimed Hagerty had told him the phrase, "which is not that unusual," was "inartfully written" and "wished she could take it back." The ombudsman was quick to defend Hagerty's "sensitivity" as a religion reporter, even at the

expense of the Catholic League, which he charged could use “a little bit more measure.”

December 14

On the day that the nation was mourning the loss of 20 children in the Newtown, Connecticut elementary school shooting, employee of Rhode Island Public Radio (RIPR), Scott MacKay, had the following exchange on Twitter:

Scott MacKay: “Hug every child you see this evening.”

Elayne C. Burke: “@ScotMackRI that’s a good way to get arrested.”

Scott MacKay: “@chatelainedc Don’t worry I’ [sic] not a priest or scoutmaster”

After it was posted, RIPR promptly had it removed. Providence Bishop Thomas Tobin responded swiftly and decisively with a letter to the CEO and General Manager of Rhode Island Public Radio about the offensive post defaming members of the clergy and gave credit to the organization for promptly removing the bigoted Twitter post.

Television

January 5

Jay Leno opened up his show with a monologue in which he commented on an auxiliary bishop from Los Angeles who had stepped down after admitting he fathered two children.

After explaining what happened, Leno said, “I thought bishops could only move diagonally. I didn’t know they could move up and down.” When making these remarks, Leno gestured with his hands, waving them side to side, and then up and down. Leno went on to say, “Isn’t it amazing the bishop of L.A. confessed to fathering two children? But, hey, he didn’t use birth control, so at least he followed the church rules. Ya gotta give him credit for that.”

January 11

"Are You There, Chelsea?" debuted on NBC as part of its new lineup of mid-season shows. It was based on the bestselling book by Chelsea Handler, *Are You There, Vodka? It's Me, Chelsea*.

The real-life Chelsea Handler was in the show, and although she is Jewish, she played a Christian. Her character was described by various reviewers as the "judgy, super-Christian sister" [of Chelsea]; a "born-again Christian" who was "supposed to be a bit of a stiff"; and an "uptight born-again Christian." Another woman played Chelsea's "goofy virgin roommate"; she was also described as "a reliably funny gangly naif."

What was particularly interesting about the show was that the Christian character did not appear in the book upon which the script is written; it was made up entirely by NBC.

February 14

Comedy Central aired an episode of the "Colbert Report" in which host Stephen Colbert addressed the Health and Human Services abortifacient mandate in a segment called "Contraception Crusade." The show's website summarized the segment this way: "Barack Obama launches a vengeful health care crusade against the Catholic church, essentially forcing priests to hand out condoms at mass." The segment crossed the line from Colbert's usual over-the-top satire into anti-Catholicism. Below is a list of his remarks:

- He said that, "Catholic groups are forced to provide contraceptives, but the pope wants his hat to be the only thing with a reservoir tip."
- There was a close-up photo of a priest distributing condoms instead of the consecrated Host.
- He said that "If Jesus would have wanted everyone to have insurance, he would have been crucified on a Blue Cross Blue Shield."
- He mocked Catholic teaching on contraception, calling it a

“central tenet” and then saying that it is as central as “marble, Jesus on toast, and unintentionally hot school uniforms.”

- He mentioned the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* and then said, “If you use contraception, you are not only sinning, you are c**kblocking the Almighty.”

- He used transubstantiation to mock how the Catholic Church receives money from “secular cash,” i.e., taxpayer dollars, which is then “transubstantiated” into “Bishop bucks” that can be used for “legal settlements.”

April 11

Two days before the opening of the film “The Three Stooges,” in which he played a nun named after a Nazi, Larry David, who has a history of anti-Catholicism, said to Conan O’Brien that dressing as a nun in the film made it easy to understand why nuns are “so mean.” He explained, “You know, the outfits might have something to do with that. Forget about the fact that they never have sex. If you gave me a choice of no sex or having to wear that outfit the rest of my life, I would definitely take the no sex.”

April 16

Comedy Central’s “The Daily Show” flashed a picture on the screen of a naked woman with her legs spread and a nativity scene ornament in between. The show’s host, Jon Stewart, called it the “vagina manger.” This was unabashed hate speech. Stewart was angry with Fox News for not being exercised over the alleged “war on women,” which is how the media was framing the defense of religious liberty against the Health and Human Services abortifacient mandate.

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CAMPAIGN AGAINST JON STEWART

In all the years of monitoring anti-Christian bigotry, seldom have we seen something as vile as what happened on April 16.

On Jon Stewart's "The Daily Show," they flashed a picture on the screen of a naked woman with her legs spread and a nativity scene ornament in between. He called it the "vagina manger." We called it hate speech. Stewart was angry with the Fox News for not being exercised over the alleged "war on women" that is going on. Ironically, in the name of defending women, he degraded them. He also unnecessarily assaulted the sensibilities of Christians; they constitute the vast majority of the population.

We did not call for Stewart to be fired, but we did call for him to apologize. After hand-delivering our request to the offices of Comedy Central (it carries the show), and failing to garner a response, we contacted ten of his major sponsors; they were asked to put pressure on the network seeking an apology.

Delta quickly apologized for Stewart's obscene stunt. Within days, the airline company went further and pulled its advertising. According to a public relations official, Delta claimed, "We just weren't comfortable with the graphic nature of their image that was used on the show."

What upset us the most was the response by Kellogg's—they blew us off. So we took them on. Bill Donohue did a lengthy interview on the number-one radio show in Battle Creek (home to Kellogg's). Interestingly, Kellogg's refused to dispatch a spokesman to explain its dismissive attitude. We also called for a boycott of Kellogg's cereals, and took out an ad in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*. To see a copy of the ad [[click here](#)].

We know we got to Stewart because during a performance in Tampa on April 21, he switched gears—going from comedic to serious—and made an oblique swipe at the Catholic League.

Our campaign against Stewart extended to the board of directors and the senior management of Viacom, the parent company of Comedy Central; we mailed them a copy of the

offensive photo. Then we sent a copy to all the bishops, as well as to religious leaders in every faith community.

We also hit the op-ed page of the *New York Times*. On May 21, "Jon Stewart's Legacy," was published, reaching millions of readers. *To see a copy of the ad [click [here](#)]*. No one in public life can afford to have his reputation damaged, not even cultural gurus like Stewart.

The avalanche of very sick e-mails we received from Stewart's fans was disturbing. It indicates that these angry young white men have a misplaced sense of priorities: if Stewart is their hero, it doesn't bode well for our nation's future. But we also received a ton of positive responses, suggesting that the culture war is still up for grabs. As always, we were relentless in our campaign.

CHRONOLOGY

The following is a chronological list of our campaign against Jon Stewart.

- April 16:** Jon Stewart performed "vagina manger" skit
- April 17:** First request for apology
- April 18:** Second request for apology
- April 19:** Start of Campaign: Allies contacted
- April 20:** Kraft Foods contacted
- April 23:** SUBWAY contacted
- April 24:** Mars, Inc. contacted
- April 25:** Kellogg's contacted
- April 26:** Delta Air Lines contacted
- April 27:** The Wrigley Company contacted
- April 30:** The Hershey Company contacted
- May 1:** Ace Hardware Company contacted
- May 2:** Paramount Farms contacted
- May 3:** Anheuser-Busch InBev contacted
- May 4:** Press release, "Jon Stewart's Record of Offending Christians"
- May 7:** Press release, "Jon Stewart's Record of Apologies"

May 8: Viacom's Board and Senior Management contacted

May 9: Catholic Bishops contacted

May 10: Mainline Protestant leaders contacted

May 11: Evangelical leaders contacted

May 14: Jewish leaders contacted

May 15: Mormon leaders contacted

May 16: Muslim leaders contacted

May 17: Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh Leaders contacted

May 20: *Kalamazoo Gazette* ad

May 21: *New York Times* ad

[/box]

April 19

On his MSNBC show, Lawrence O' Donnell expressed antipathy towards the Catholic Church, attacking Peoria Bishop David Jenky, Church teachings on abortion and gay rights, and the right of the Vatican to discipline its flock. He also attacked the Catholic League and interviewed Sister Jeannine Gramick and an official from Dignity, which has been rejected as a Catholic entity.

May 2

On Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," Jon Stewart opened with a replay of Lawrence O'Donnell's tirade against Mormons that had aired April 3 on MSNBC.

Stewart then said: "Mormons aren't the only religion whose origin story can be explained as a convenient alibi. You can easily say that Christianity was created by a knocked up teenage girl who told her parents an angel had come down and...." Stewart was then interrupted with laughter, but not before they showed a huge picture of a pregnant Virgin Mary on the screen.

May 2

E!'s show "Chelsea Lately" featured a roundtable discussion with three comedian guests. Host Chelsea Handler discussed a

story out of Ireland about a priest who was asked to leave his parish because he “accidentally showed pictures of gay porn during a Power Point presentation” to parents at a grade school. The presentation was “supposed to be about the First Holy Communion.” Handler continued: “Then he insisted he was not responsible for the presence of the offending images and immediately removed the memory stick from the laptop and destroyed it later that evening.” Handler said into the camera sarcastically, “After he transferred the images to his desktop.”

Guest Dov Davidoff then said, “The Catholic Church has got to be celebrating. The pope right now is just relieved, like, at least they were over 18, the actors. I don’t know. They get a bad rap, these priests. They just had another thing with the Boy Scouts and the priests. I don’t know. After a while maybe we should start pointing the finger at sexy-a** boys.” Guest Ben Gleib ended the segment by saying, “People are still sending their kids to the same church, too. I would rather send my kids inside a tanning bed to be honest.”

June 15

ABC provided coverage of a daredevil crossing the Niagara Falls on a tightrope. Live footage and real-time live blogging of his death-defying feat blacked out any mention of his audible prayers to Jesus along the way, which included such shout-outs as “Praise you, Father God. Praise you, Jesus!” This was a glaring example of media intolerance of public displays of piety by Christians.

October 6-7

In the run-up to the debut of stand-up comedian ventriloquist Jeff Dunham’s new special, “Minding the Monsters,” on October 7, Comedy Central re-aired Dunham’s 2007 program, “Spark of Insanity,” in which he took a swipe at Catholic priests. The “joke” went as follows:

Puppet: I’m kidding, I would not kill the Jews, no. I would

toss a penny between them, and watch them fight to the death. (laughter) Yes, yes. I did the same thing with two Catholic priests, but I tossed in a small boy. Yes, yes. and the winner had to fight Michael Jackson!

Dunham went back to the well in "Minding the Monsters." One "joke" implied priests scared children:

Puppet: We were supposed to dress as whatever scared us as a kid.

Dunham: Oh, so for you, that was Frankenstein?

Puppet: Actually, it was a Catholic priest, but... (laughter, applause) But...everybody gets mad when I offend the Mexicans. (laughter, applause)

October 7

The second episode of a new Comedy Central animated series, "Brickleberry," contained an attack on priests. In the episode, Steve, a mean character who contracts a sexually transmitted disease and is told he has only two weeks to live, speaks to an Irish priest in the confessional. The conversation ends with a blatant shot against priests. After discussing what it means to do good deeds for other people, the following words are said:

Steve: "Wait. Wouldn't it be better if I just followed you around? You're a priest.

Priest: "Too busy, Steven. I've got this other gig where I dress as a clown." [Priest puts on a clown costume.]

The clown costume was used to insinuate that the priest was a pedophile.

October 12

Addressing the vice presidential debate between two Catholics, Vice President Joe Biden and Congressman Paul Ryan, Bill Maher said the following on his HBO show: "I have not seen an old Catholic guy give it to a young Catholic guy like that since since I was an altar boy."

October 17

The second season of the FX show, "American Horror Story," began. The subtitle of this season's series was called "Asylum." FX decided to portray a sadistic nun who runs an evil Catholic home for the criminally insane. Prior to the season's debut, the Catholic League went on the offensive against FX for trashing nuns.

October 19

On a segment of the Fox News show, "The Five," commentator Bob Beckel made a bigoted statement about priests, suggesting they are criminals. When co-panelist Greg Gutfeld remarked that welfare has replaced charity and that government has taken on the role of churches in taking care of people. The following exchange ensued:

Beckel: I didn't know you were an expert on churches.

Gutfeld: Well, I spent a long time in them, Bob. I grew up in one. I was an altar boy for a long time.

Beckel: OK, you were an altar boy?

Gutfeld: Yes, I was. I'll show you some pictures.

Beckel: Who was your priest?

Gutfeld: Ah...Father Zoft.

Beckel: Was he arrested?

October 22

On the "Ellen DeGeneres Show," host Ellen DeGeneres showed her tolerance for Catholic bashing when she welcomed Jessica Lange to her show. Lange played an "evil nun" on the FX show, "American Horror Story: Asylum."

Lange and DeGeneres had a good time feeding the worst possible stereotype of "mean" nuns. Lange admitted, with typical Hollywood brilliance, that she "wasn't raised in any kind of religious situation, so, I mean, we didn't go to church or anything." That was apparent enough. In discussing nuns, words like "insanity" and "evil" were used.

October 23

An episode of the NBC sitcom, "The New Normal," a series about a male homosexual couple and a surrogate mother, was entitled "The Godparent Trap." The episode contained an offensive scene that attacked the Catholic Church for its teaching on marriage and homosexuality.

The pretext for the attack is that the homosexual couple decide it's time to find godparents for their baby. They want "spiritual guidance for their child since they have little themselves." One of the homosexuals, Bryan, grew up Catholic and decides to go to a church, where he makes offensive comments to himself: "12 dudes sitting around gossiping and drinking wine? You call that the Last Supper? I call that a Tuesday night. Hey, Mary. I'm a virgin, too. I've also slept in a barn with three wise men. I'm sorry. I shouldn't be talking smack about your mother. But you know who judges me? Your father."

Bryan is then shown in a confessional talking to a priest. The priest says about the pope: "Oh, yeah, the pope. Come on. Haven't you ever had a lovable old uncle who popped off intolerant comments at a family barbecue?" He also says that the Church can "change," specifically saying that "I've seen gay people battle discrimination and march for marriage equality."

October 27

On the "Late Show with David Letterman," the show's host used the news that Pope Benedict XVI had announced seven new saints to launch into a skit featuring "Saint Jeffrey Tompkins of Massapequa, New York," whom Letterman claimed was one of the saints. When Letterman asked him what his plans were, Tompkins responded, "First, I'll stop by Saint Patrick's...you know, company business. Then I'm going back to the hotel and get myself a cheeseburger and a whore." The audience laughed at this joke. Later on in the show, Tompkins said to Letterman as part of the skit, "The Vatican found out about the whore. I'm

no longer a saint. Thanks a lot a**hole!"

November 20

On the FX show, "Brand X," host Russell Brand invited two representatives from the Westboro Baptist Church as guests. One of them was wearing a t-shirt that read "priestsrapeboys.com" and showed a skull with a clerical collar.

December 13

On TBS's "Conan," host Conan O'Brien made an attack on the pope which was remarkable for its utter lack of context. The gratuitous insult went as follows: "Pope Benedict's in the news. Pope Benedict has come out with a children's book. Yeah. The book is called stay the Hell away from Father O'Malley."

December 24

On E! Entertainment Television's "Chelsea Lately," host Chelsea Handler's opening monologue featured "The Story of Christmas as Told by a Jew," in which she made stupid, vulgar, and obscene comments to mock Christians at Christmastime. Among them were:

- The Virgin Mary was a virgin because this was "the olden days before they invented the bikini wax so it was tough for any man to find her peekachu."
- She said St. Joseph "was not the baby's father," saying that "it was also rumored that Joseph had a lower sperm count because he smoked too much weed."
- She also created offense when she introduced Jesus, who was represented onstage by a dwarf wearing a beauty contest sash that said "Saviour."

December 27

On his MSNBC show, host Lawrence O'Donnell attacked the Church for its stance on traditional marriage and spoke derisively about the Church's teaching, accusing the Vatican of being "full of guys who have taken a lifetime vow to remain

tragically ignorant about marriage.”

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