

2016 YEAR IN REVIEW

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TRUMP MUST LOCK IN RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS

Bill Donohue comments on religious exemptions to federal legislation:

President-elect Donald Trump has pledged to work with people of faith on many matters, and his goodwill is very much appreciated. Among the most pressing issues is the fate of religious exemptions to federal laws.

The Obama administration has waged war on religious institutions in many ways: it has sought to redefine Catholic institutions by forcing them to provide coverage for abortion-inducing drugs in their healthcare plans, and has denied funds to Catholic institutions that fight human trafficking (this was payback for opposing abortion). It has also sought to undo legislative provisions that are religion-friendly. Moreover, these attacks have inspired radical secularists to do likewise at the state level.

One of the many ways the Obama administration has sought to undermine religious organizations is to deny the kinds of religious exemptions that have traditionally been granted by previous administrations. Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments is a case in point.

Title IX bars discrimination on the basis of sex in educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance. It explicitly exempts religious organizations. Until Obama took power in 2009, there were few, if any, problems with this provision. The most recent issue is the absence of the religious exemption afforded by Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, or ObamaCare.

The problem is not the language of Title IX; rather, it is with the way the language has been twisted by LGBT activists and government lawyers. For example, the absence of a religious exemption to ObamaCare now means that Catholic non-profits are faced with having to pay for “gender transition services, hormonal treatments, counseling and a host of surgeries that would remove or transform the sexual organs of men or women transitioning to the other gender.” This is madness at any level, never mind forcing religious institutions to honor it.

Similar legislation almost passed in California in September, and attempts to intimidate religious institutions—forcing them to post exemptions from Title IX on their websites—is the subject of a bill introduced by Rep. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts.

Traditional Catholics, evangelicals, observant Jews, as well as many Mormons and Muslims, will be looking to the Trump administration to lock in religious exemptions provided by federal laws. Fortunately, Dr. Tom Price, who has been a strong advocate of religious freedom in Congress, will head the Department of Health and Human Services, the agency that has waged a relentless war on religious institutions.

The Catholic League strongly urges the Trump administration to undo the damage that the Obama administration has done to religious entities.

IS OBAMA ANTI-CHRISTMAS?

President Obama made the following remarks in a recent NPR interview:

"I've had to live through controversies like the notion that I was trying to kill Christmas. Right? Well, where'd that come from? Well, I bet, you know, well, he said Happy Holidays instead of Merry Christmas. So, that, you know, that must be evidence of him either not being a Christian or not caring about Christmas. It—it sounds funny now, but you'll have entire debates in conservative circles around that."

Bill Donohue comments as follows:

Well, you know, there is evidence of Obama not caring about Christmas, and it didn't emanate from conservative circles. Here it is.

The cover story of the July 23, 2008 edition of *People* magazine featured a picture of Barack and Michelle Obama, and their two daughters, Malia, 10, and Sasha, 7. *People* reported that "The kids receive no birthday or Christmas presents from Mom and Dad, who spend 'hundreds' on birthday slumber parties and, as Barack puts it, 'want to teach some limits.'"

On December 7, 2009, weeks before the Obamas celebrated their first Christmas in the White House, I said in a news release, "If the Obamas want to deprive their children of celebrating Christmas, that is their business. It is the business of the public to hold them accountable for the way they celebrate Christmas in the White House."

What I was referring to was a December 7, 2009 news story in the *New York Times* by Sheryl Gay Stolberg. She wrote, "When

former social secretaries gave a luncheon to welcome Ms. [Desirée] Rogers earlier this year, one participant said, she surprised them by suggesting the Obamas were planning a 'non-religious Christmas...."

"The lunch conversation inevitably turned to whether the White House would display its crèche, customarily placed in a prominent spot in the East Room," Stolberg wrote. "Ms. Rogers, this participant said, replied that the Obamas did not intend to put the manger scene on display—a remark that drew an audible gasp from the tight-knit social secretary sisterhood. (A White House official confirmed that there had been internal discussions about making Christmas more inclusive and whether to display the crèche.)"

The person whom the Obamas chose to oversee Christmas decorations in 2009 was Simon Doonan, the head of creative services for Barneys in New York. A website, biggovernment.com, posted pictures of some of the Christmas tree ornaments. They featured such religious figures as Mao Zedong, a genocidal maniac, and various drag queens. Fox News did a story on this issue as well; it aired December 22, 2009.

None of this was a mistake. The Obamas chose Doonan because of his stellar Christmas reputation.

I had a showdown with Doonan in 1994 when I protested the store's "Hello Kitty Nativity Scene." It was more than a spoof of the traditional nativity scene—it showed a kitten Virgin Mary posed with her legs spread wearing an undergarment that left six nipples in evidence.

On December 9, 1994, after someone called the Catholic League office to complain, I personally confronted store officials at the 61st Street and Madison Avenue store: I told them they had 45 minutes to remove the offensive crèche. They didn't budge. Then I hit the air waves. Within hours, it was removed. Doonan called me saying he was surprised by the reaction of New

Yorkers. I quickly brought him up to speed, explaining that Catholics were no longer going to tolerate this kind of intolerance.

Obama says conservatives lie when they say he is uncaring about Christmas. Yet he and his wife refuse to give their children Christmas presents; they gave serious consideration to censoring a White House crèche; they hired a man to be in charge of Christmas decorations who is known for trashing Christmas; and they displayed Christmas tree ornaments in the White House featuring pictures of mass murderers and kinky men.

Wonder who fed the idea that Obama is not exactly Christmas-friendly?

COMEDY CENTRAL'S FILTHY ATTACK ON NUNS

Bill Donohue comments on last night's episode of "This is Not Happening":

Comedy Central featured yet another anti-Catholic bigot, comedian Joey Diaz, who went on a foul rant describing his retaliation against a nun who he claims used to hit him when he attended Catholic school.

"I grabbed her by the veil, 'cause that's where all the magic powers are right? [laughter]. I grabbed her by the [bleep] veil, and I'm like don't you ever [bleep] hit me again you [bleep] sucker! I hate you!"

Diaz then jokes about how he physically assaulted the nun:

"I just grabbed her. I kept bangin' her [bleep] head. I don't give a [bleep] you [bleep]. I know a lot of you mother [bleep] be like 'Joe, you can't hit a woman.' She's a [bleep] nun. Big [bleep] difference. She don't suck no [bleep], they don't take it in the [bleep], these mother [bleep] are angry, all right?"

Looks like dumping Doug Herzog means there will be no changes at Comedy Central—they have a nasty habit of replacing one dirtbag with another.

Contact Jeremy Zweig, Vice President,
Corporate Communications: jeremy@viacom.com

MEDIA IGNORE ANOTHER ABUSE STORY

Bill Donohue comments on the media's selective interest in sexual abuse:

If a priest is accused of inappropriately touching a minor, it makes the news. When other segments of society—teachers, Hollywood studio executives, therapists—are accused, the media show much less interest, and sometimes practically none at all. The latter is now evident in the way most media outlets treated the story about USA Gymnastics that broke last week.

Over the years, IndyStar, the home page of the *Indianapolis Star*, has done fine work covering the sexual abuse of gymnasts, but nothing can compare with the report it released on December 15. It is the most comprehensive examination of USA Gymnastics ever issued (USA Gymnastics is headquartered in Indianapolis). Its investigation found widespread abuse: 115 adults at every level of the sport were accused of

molestation.

The study reflects an IndyStar-USA Today Network review of “hundreds of police files and court cases across the country”; its findings are stunning.

- “At least 368 gymnasts have alleged some form of sexual abuse at the hands of their coaches, gym owners and other adults working in gymnastics.”
- “A nine-month investigation found that predatory coaches were allowed to move from gym to gym, undetected by a lax system of oversight, or dangerously passed on by USA Gymnastics-certified gyms.”

Not all gyms are members of USA Gymnastics, but it is the nation’s largest gymnastics organization, and it is the most influential body affecting a path to the Olympics. Its membership includes more than 125,000 athletes, 25,000 professional members (coaches, et al.), and 3,450 clubs.

One of the most disturbing findings was the way USA Gymnastics dealt with Doug Boger. In 2009, he was named USA Gymnastics Coach of the Year and was sent with the U.S. team to the World Championships in St. Petersburg, Russia. He was also under investigation at the time for molesting women gymnasts in the 1980s. Incredibly, officials at the organization said that those who awarded Boger Coach of the Year were unaware of the probe.

When children as young as 6 are secretly photographed by coaches, and a 12-year-old is molested during a “therapy session,” something is seriously wrong. That a coach can have sex on an almost daily basis with a 14-year-old at one of the most prestigious gyms in the nation—supposedly unbeknownst to everyone—is just too much to believe.

What does USA Gymnastics do about these cases? The reporters found that “it makes no effort to track fired coaches moving through its system of independent gyms, or to enforce many of

the rules it recommends for its members.” This explains why Jeffrey Bettman was able to make 469 videos of 49 gymnasts in changing rooms, many of them naked or partly naked; they ranged in age from 8 to 16. He was repeatedly fired from gyms, and no one bothered to track him.

To their credit, the reporters cite the progress made by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in handling cases of priestly sexual abuse. The reporters note that the bishops “adopted restrictions that exceed those of USA Gymnastics.”

The media blackout is inexcusable. The only story in the *New York Times* was a 93-word story taken from a French media outlet. The *Washington Post* has said nothing, save for a blog post. The AP ignored the report altogether. TV broadcast news and the cable TV networks were no better. There were a few web posts by these outlets on the IndyStar report, but that was about it.

No media outlet was worse than the *Boston Globe*. When it comes to priests, this newspaper pulls out all the stops, garnering the interest of Hollywood to make the film, “Spotlight.” But it has said nothing about USA Gymnastics.

As if to prove me right about its selective interest in this subject, the *Boston Globe* has a front-page story in today’s Metro section titled, “Across New England, Outdated Sexual Abuse Laws Contain Loopholes that Fail to Protect Students.” The first sentence is about a teenage girl who was involved in a sexual relationship seven years ago in a Catholic high school with her Spanish teacher.

Oh, yes, it did say something about other schools. “A national study suggested sexual misconduct is common at public schools as well.” That was it in a 2000-word story. There have actually been many studies, and none “suggested” anything. To cite one example, a decade ago the AP ran a series on the public schools that was rich in detail.

The public schools are home to “passing the trash” (moving predators from one school district to another). Moreover, tenure regulations make it all but impossible to fire child rapists. And this is going on right now, though readers of the *Boston Globe* would never know it. The reporters are too busy securing allegations against Father Murphy for groping a kid 50 years ago.

Kudos to IndyStar reporters Tim Evans, Mark Alesia, and Marisa Kwiatkowski for doing such a splendid job. And shame on the rest of the media, most especially the *Boston Globe*.

OBAMA IS “OUR MOST CATHOLIC OF PRESIDENTS”

Bill Donohue comments on a remarkable claim about President Obama:

On the December 15 edition of the “Axe Files” podcast, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough told David Axelrod the following about President Barack Obama. “I think this is the—our most Catholic of presidents. And I mean that by capital C Catholic, in what I see and what he does every day. It’s not to say that he’s—does everything entirely consistent with Catholic teaching. That’s not the idea.”

We’ll, yes that is the idea. When someone says that Obama is “our most Catholic of presidents,” surely the record should speak for itself. Here are some of Obama’s views and policies that McDonough needs to explain.

- In 2003, when Obama was an Illinois state senator, he led the fight to oppose a bill that would have mandated

health care for a baby who survived an abortion, and he did so *even after the bill explicitly said it would not imperil Roe v. Wade*. The Catholic Church does not support infanticide.

- Before he was elected in 2008, he said he would sign a bill, the Freedom of Choice Act, that would have forced Catholic hospitals to perform abortions.
- One of the first executive orders Obama signed after being sworn in on January 20, 2009 was to overturn the Mexico City Policy that denied federal funding of private organizations that perform and promote abortions abroad.
- On January 29, 2009, Obama said he looked forward to restoring U.S. aid to the U.N. Population Fund that pays for abortion.
- Obama supports partial-birth abortion, the procedure where a baby who is 80 percent born has his head pierced with a scissors.
- In 2008, Obama said the biggest mistake he ever made was to side with the parents of Terry Schiavo: they petitioned a federal court to allow their daughter food and medicine needed to live. Obama reversed himself, thus siding with those who said, just “let her die.”
- Obama sent his two daughters to private schools but opposed every school choice initiative that would allow poor parents to escape the public schools by enrolling in a private or parochial school.
- Obama opposed the Defense of Marriage Act signed by President Bill Clinton that allowed the states to determine what defines marriage, thus undercutting the traditional definition.
- Obama supports same-sex marriage.
- Obama opposes a display of the Ten Commandments on public property.
- Obama supports the intentional killing of embryos.
- Obama sought to appoint Dawn Johnsen to head the Office of Legal Counsel. She cut her teeth as a lawyer working

with the ACLU in the late 1980s trying to take away the tax exempt status of the Catholic Church.

- Obama appointed Harry Knox to his Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnership program. He has a record of hate speech against the pope.
- Obama was the first president to welcome atheist leaders to the White House, some of whom are Catholic bashers.
- When Obama spoke at Georgetown University in April 2009, his staff insisted that all religious symbols in the room where he was to speak had to be covered with a drape.
- Obama's Health and Human Services mandate, still pushed by the administration, says that Catholic institutions that hire and serve non-Catholics are no longer Catholic, and are therefore subject to government oversight. This includes the Little Sisters of the Poor.
- Obama fought U.S. bishops for years—and is doing so now—trying to force Catholic non-profits to pay for abortion-inducing drugs, contraception, and sterilization in their healthcare plans.
- Obama made sure that no grants went to Catholic programs that provide relief to the victims of human trafficking—even though the grant proposals received high scores from independent reviewers—simply because the Church's opposes abortion.

I could go on, but the point is clear: If Obama is the “most Catholic of presidents,” then why has he spent the last eight years sticking it to Catholics and the Catholic Church?

SPARKS FLY OVER TEXAS ABORTION RULE

Bill Donohue comments on the treatment of human remains from abortions:

Effective December 19, Texas will require that the remains of children killed in utero by an abortionist must be buried or cremated. The new rules were written by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission "to protect the dignity of the unborn." Governor Greg Abbott agrees, saying that fetal remains should not be "treated like medical waste and disposed of in landfills."

The new regulations, which have the backing of Texas bishops, do not apply to women who have abortions or miscarriages at home, nor do they require birth and death certificates, or a funeral; the latter were considered an invasion of the woman's privacy.

No matter, the rule makes a clear political and cultural statement: abortion kills. There is no legitimate argument to the contrary. After all, burial and cremation are predicated on, and indeed are expressive of, life. We don't bury and cremate inanimate objects.

As expected, the new provisions are being condemned by Planned Parenthood, NARAL Pro-Choice, the Center for Reproductive Rights, and the entire abortion industry. An official at the pro-abortion Guttmacher Institute has expressed grave concerns about how "the products of conception," as she calls them, will be treated. Her sanitized language masks the reality of what is, in actual fact, the tissue and organs of a human being.

Some of the opponents of the new rules are Satanic. I choose my words carefully. To be exact, the Satanic Temple is a big

advocate of abortion and a vocal adversary of the new regulations. Its members say the new Texas requirement “goes against their religious belief” in the “inviolability of one’s body.”

The Satanic Temple claims to be a “non-theistic religious organization dedicated to Satanic practice and the promotion of Satanic rights.” So what are these rights? The Satanic Temple’s top issues are abortion and gay marriage (it has no position on climate change).

What do the adherents of the Satanic Temple do when they meet? They dance, visit porn rooms, celebrate phallic imagery, and engage in sadomasochistic acts. They also like nudity. This is obviously a very unconventional religion. Apparently, it has no choir.

The most radical chapter of this organization is the Satanic Temple of Detroit. It is livid over the new Texas rules.

Last spring, when pro-life Americans protested Planned Parenthood, the Detroit chapter responded by crashing these events dressed “in bondage fetish wear, baby masks and diapers and engaged in group flagellation.” They called this their “Satanic BDSM Babies” stunt (bondage, discipline, domination, submission, sadism and masochism). “The action was intended to expose fetal idolatry and the perpetuation of fictional, coercive propaganda” against Planned Parenthood.

The Satanic Temple of Detroit is run by someone who goes by the pseudonym, Jex Blackmore. The Texas regulations are driving her crazy. She is urging her fellow Satanists to “mail their sperm-soaked rags, socks and condoms to Governor Abbott’s office.”

Blackmore is obsessed with abortion, so much so that she induced an abortion on Thanksgiving, 2015, and then blogged about it. What was it like? I’ll let her speak for herself.

“Well, you basically go into labor. You have contractions. The experience is a little different for everyone, but I know several women who have told me stories that were similar to my experience. The pain starts off like normal menstrual cramps but then it becomes intense, deeper. It’s certainly manageable, but about an hour or so before I passed pregnancy tissue I experienced blinding pain. It was really intense, but as soon as it was over, it was over. There wasn’t a gradual decrease in pain; it was really painful and then it was done.”

Blackmore may be extreme, but what she champions—homicide in the womb—is embraced by many. Thank God Texans are showing their grit. Other states need to follow.

Contact: jex@thesatanictemple.com

VIACOM’S FAKE NEWS

Bill Donohue exposes Viacom as a fraud:

The media are in a rage these days over what they call “fake news.” But few Americans take them seriously, nor should they. Take Viacom, the media giant.

Viacom has issued a lengthy report, “Social Impact Review 2016,” a statement that is strewn with “fake news” about itself.

The document says Viacom seeks to build “inclusive societies.” How so? By seeking to “mobilize a more tolerant society.” It also aims to “inspire young people to take action against bias.”

It’s all a lie. Just consider what aired on Viacom networks last night.

“Rock the Troops” was shown on Viacom’s Spike TV, Comedy Central, and CMT (Country Music Television) networks. At one point, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson said that comedian Jeff Ross was “a religious man. He actually models his life after Jesus, and by that I mean he’s a Jew who’s only been nailed three times.”

It would be instructive to learn from a Viacom spokesman how segments like this contribute to “a more tolerant society,” and how they “inspire young people to take action against bias.”

A little later, Viacom aired “@midnight with Chris Hardwick.” The host asked a panel, “What’s an even cooler holiday than making Hanukkah-themed a capella parody songs?” Comedian Kurt Braunohler refused to take a cheap shot at Jews, instead saying, “Killing Jesus so he never had to hear that f***ing song.”

It would be instructive to learn from a Viacom spokesman how segments like this contribute to the building of “inclusive societies.”

Fake news. That is what Viacom specializes in. It is a master of deceit and duplicity, and is second to none in promoting bigotry and intolerance toward Christians.

Contact Viacom press agent Alex Rindler:
Alex.Rindler@viacom.com

NATIVITY SCENE IN CENTRAL

PARK

Bill Donohue comments on the Catholic League's crèche:

Every year there are many news stories on the unconstitutionality of displaying a nativity scene on public property. Some of those stories are simply wrong.

There can be a problem when the proposed site for the display of religious symbols is on the grounds of a county courthouse, or near some other municipal building (it cannot appear that the government is endorsing religion). But if the property is a public forum, such as a park, that is different. If the area is available for concerts, artistic displays, rallies, and the like, then the government cannot selectively deny religious expression.

If there is any doubt about this issue, then the skeptics need to see the life-size nativity scene in New York City's Central Park, on the corner of 59th Street and 5th Avenue, courtesy of the Catholic League. It was erected by Ernie Chirico and Joe Agosta of Cross NY on our behalf. The site is known as Grand Army Plaza, situated in front of the Plaza Hotel.

The Catholic League receives a permit from the New York City Parks Department for its crèche. It will be up for 24 days, through the new year.

Merry Christmas to all. And don't let the anti-Christmas bullies prevail!

ANOTHER ATTACK ON THE EUCHARIST

Bill Donohue comments on TruTV'S mockery of the sacraments:

Earlier today, we took Fox's "Family Guy" to task for last night's episode ridiculing the Eucharist. Now we must call out Turner Broadcasting's TruTV for "Rachel Dratch's Late Night Snack," which last Friday night also mocked this most sacred of Catholic sacraments.

The offensive skit featured a pitch man's voice promoting "Cheez-Its Christ" as "the one, true, mid-day Communion snack that belongs in your child's lunch box." For good measure, the skit also threw in a shot at the Catholic sacrament of Penance: "Cheez-Its Christ. The only snack that fills them up and absolves their sins."

We know it's the Christmas season, which to Hollywood is always open season on Catholics. But apparently their hatred is so deep that they must sink to attacking the very essence of our faith. They know the centrality of the Eucharist to Roman Catholics, which is precisely why they defamed it. Many Americans, as we recently witnessed, are fed up with these politically correct assaults. We can only hope that in 2017 more Americans push back stronger than ever.

Contact: lauren.mccabe@turner.com