

# 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

The Catholic League's 2020 Year in Review is now available. It contains an overview of some of our most important battles and victories over the last year. To read it, click [here](#).

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## CUOMO LOSES AGAIN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on another court victory for religious liberty:

On December 28, the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the Diocese of Brooklyn and the Orthodox Jewish group Agudath Israel in their attempts to overturn the tyrannical edicts of Governor Andrew Cuomo: he loves to impose occupancy limits on houses of worship. For those keeping score at home, this is Cuomo's third defeat in court.

The most recent setback for Cuomo came in the form of a 3-0 decision by the Second Circuit to block his restrictions which limit the capacity of worshipers to 10 in red zones and 25 in orange zones.

In the court's ruling, Circuit Judge Michael Park said, "no public interest is served by maintaining an unconstitutional policy..." This is a scathing rebuke, and Cuomo would do well to abandon his course. However, he is no stranger to defeat and appears not to heed such warnings from the courts.

On June 26, U.S. District Court Judge Gary Sharpe handed Cuomo his first defeat when he ruled that the governor exceeded his authority by putting restrictions on people of faith while simultaneously condoning protests.

Not to be deterred by this ruling, in October, Cuomo tried again to limit the religious liberties of New Yorkers when he issued his dictates to cap the number of worshipers in houses of worship to 10 or 25 people. Fortunately, on November 25, the Supreme Court intervened and provided a temporary injunction against enforcing these draconian restrictions. The ruling from the Second Circuit made the high court's decision more enduring.

If this were a game of baseball, this would be Cuomo's third strike, and he would be out. Unfortunately, Cuomo is not a major leaguer. He is a tyrant, and tyrants do not play by those rules. Their voracious appetite for power and insatiable lust to dominate their fellow man cannot be curtailed so easily. That is why it has taken a district court, a circuit court and the Supreme Court to try to bring Cuomo to heel.

It will require courageous men and women of all faiths to remain vigilant and continue the fight to safeguard our freedoms. However, rulings like these three against Cuomo boost our chances of success, and as far as the Catholic League is concerned, this is one man who cannot lose enough.

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## **ANTI-CATHOLICISM SPIKED IN 2020**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the increase in anti-Catholicism in 2020:

There is plenty of empirical evidence to conclude that anti-Catholicism grew by leaps and bounds in 2020: church vandalism, much of it done to make a political statement, was rampant in those parts of the country where mob rule was

tolerated; Covid restrictions on houses of worship were often imposed arbitrarily, requiring Catholic dioceses to challenge them in court; comments made by political and cultural elites about Christians, especially Christian voters, were harsh if not cruel.

As important as any measure, Catholics themselves expressed concern about the state of bigotry in the nation. An EWTN survey in late August found that a majority of Catholics said they were either “very concerned” or “somewhat concerned” about the following:

- Vandalization and attacks on churches
- Overall anti-Christian sentiment on the fringes of the protests
- Calls by activists to tear down statues, murals and stained-glass windows depicting Jesus as a “white European”
- Vandalization and tearing down statues of famous Catholics
- Protesters in Portland, Oregon burning Bibles

Not surprisingly, those Catholics who attended Mass once or more a week were the most alarmed about these events.

Who are the most likely to be anti-Catholic? Not surprising to the Catholic League, but no doubt surprising to many others, it is precisely those who fancy themselves as the most tolerant who, once again, showed themselves to be the most intolerant. For example, a Rasmussen survey found in October that 15% of Democrats who were likely voters said that Catholics should be prohibited from sitting on the U.S. Supreme Court; the figure was 9% for Republicans.

A large survey of the American public conducted by the University of Virginia’s Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture, “Democracy in Dark Times,” reported in November that Biden voters were *much more likely* to consider Trump voters

negatively than was true vice versa.

The majority of Biden voters consider Trump voters to be “closed-minded” (89%); “misguided and misinformed” (89%); “intolerant” (86%); “racist” (83%); “religious hypocrites” (80%); “authoritarian” (77%); “dangerous” (77%); “ignorant” (78%); “fascist” (63%); “un-American” (53%); “un-Christian” (59%); “undereducated” (63%); and “dishonest” (58%). Four in ten Biden voters consider Trump voters to be “evil.”

It can safely be said that when Hillary Clinton called Trump supporters “deplorables,” she was speaking for most Democrats. The level of hatred that Republicans have for Democrats is nowhere near as great.

It is telling that this survey did not ask Trump voters whether they consider Biden voters to be “religious hypocrites.” Perhaps that is because the University of Virginia social scientists figured it would be a waste of time: one can hardly be a hypocrite about a value one does not possess.

The cancel culture, which impacts Catholics as much as any segment in society, is not executed by those who hold to traditional values. No, it is the reserve of the educated elites, those who see themselves as beacons of tolerance. On that score, their hypocrisy quotient would be near perfect.

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## **ILL-SERVING MINORITY STUDENTS**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on why minority students are still struggling:

It is one of history’s greatest ironies: No segment of society

punishes the poor more than those who champion their cause. This is true historically in nations claimed by Marxism, and in democratic nations today claimed by liberalism. Rhetoric aside, the left always screws the poor. The latest Marxist to do so, in a democratic country no less, is New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio.

De Blasio recently announced that the way to help the poor do better in school is to hike taxes on the rich. He said “our mission is to redistribute wealth” and to close the “COVID achievement gap.”

The man is clueless. Owing to absurdly high taxes, the rich are leaving New York in droves; taxing them at an even higher rate will only encourage more to leave. They are taking their tax contributions and their jobs with them.

Moreover, fleecing the rich will do absolutely nothing to enhance academic achievement. We have known for decades that there is no correlation between spending on students per capita and academic achievement. Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia, D.C. is #1 in spending per student and #51 in academic achievement.

What makes for student success is the family, not the schools. Asians are “people of color,” yet they have no problem succeeding in school. That’s because, unlike African Americans, the typical Asian family has a father and a mother at home.

So the “color” argument that de Blasio favors—structural racism is holding blacks back—is completely false. Black kids from two-parent families are not failing in school. The real issue is the family, not race.

That said, it is not as though schools don’t matter at all, it’s just that they are of secondary importance. If de Blasio really wanted poor kids to succeed in school, he would spend money on charter schools, provide scholarships to private

schools, endorse school choice, and allow the poor to enroll in Catholic schools. Instead, he fights every initiative that works. To top things off, he is the one who opens and shuts the schools like a madman, thus exacerbating the “COVID achievement gap” he claims to bemoan.

Playing Robin Hood drives the rich out of New York, shrinks the tax base, and does nothing to help the poor succeed in school. De Blasio is a three time loser, all in the name of championing their cause.

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## PROGRESS MADE ON ICE DETAINEE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue is asking everyone to push one more time for the release of a Thai man who is still in the custody of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE):

*Earlier this month, I asked everyone to appeal to the White House requesting that Pornchai Moontri be released from ICE. For those of you who are unfamiliar with his case, read the story below.*

*We need you to make one more appeal to President Trump before Christmas. Why? Because we have learned that just days after many of you answered our call and appealed to the White House, the Thailand embassy was contacted by ICE saying there is movement in his case. He is in his fourth month of ICE custody.*

*Click [here](#) to access the form for the White House appeal. Suggested remarks: “President Trump: Please expedite the repatriation of Pornchai Moontri (ICE detention A-039064244). He has paid his debt to society and simply wants to return*

*home to his native Thailand."*

Here is why Pornchai deserves to be released.

Pornchai was born in Thailand in 1973 and was abandoned by his mother when he was two-years-old. She intended to sell him, but a young relative came to his rescue and brought him into his home. When he was 11-years-old his mother reemerged with a new husband; they took him to Bangor, Maine, against his will. His stepfather, Richard Bailey, immediately started raping him, and did so for three years. At age 14, Pornchai escaped (it was his second escape) and became homeless. When he was 18, he got into a fight with a much bigger man while he was intoxicated and took the man's life during the struggle (he was so drunk he does not recall stabbing him).

While awaiting trial, Pornchai's mother came to visit him in jail, warning him that if he disclosed to the authorities what his stepfather did to him, she would suffer the consequences. Fearing for his mother's life, he prudently decided not to speak, even to the point of not defending himself in court. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to 45 years in prison. Maine has no parole.

In 2000, his mother attempted to leave her husband; they were living in Guam. That is where she was beaten to death. The only suspect was her husband, but there was no evidence to convict him. Subsequently, many things changed.

In 2005, Pornchai was sent to a New Hampshire State Prison. That is where he met Fr. MacRae. Five years later, Pornchai became a Catholic; he soon became a fan of the Catholic League.

In 2018, after new evidence emerged—advocates for Pornchai pursued Bailey—and justice was finally done. Bailey was convicted on forty felony counts of child sexual abuse against Pornchai.

On September 11, 2020, Pornchai, after serving his full sentence, was released at age 47 to the custody of ICE for deportation to his native Thailand. He is still in custody, with no end in sight.

Pornchai has served his time and has suffered enough. He should now be set free.

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## **BISHOPS AFFIRM CONSCIENCE RIGHTS**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest battle for conscience rights:

“I cannot take the life of a child in one room and guide another child into this world in the next.”

Those are the words of Regina Frost, a Christian doctor who earlier this year expressed her disdain for Planned Parenthood and the state of New York when they went to court seeking to force medical professionals to perform abortions. As an OB-GYN, Frost took umbrage at the audacity of these “pro-choice” enthusiasts. It is quite obvious that the pro-abortion industry respects neither the choice of the child to be born nor the choice of people like Dr. Frost not to participate in abortions.

This issue is now back in the news. The Department of Justice filed a civil lawsuit on December 16 against the University of Vermont Medical Center for reportedly forcing medical professionals to perform an abortion against their will. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say this issue *should be back in the news*: aside from the Associated Press, the only



media outlets covering this story are Catholic and conservative ones.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan is the chairman of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) Committee for Religious Liberty, and Archbishop Joseph Naumann is chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Pro-Life Activities. They issued a strong statement commending the Trump Administration for defending conscience rights by "taking corrective action" against the University of Vermont Medical Center.

In 2018, a nurse at this medical center in Burlington, Vermont filed a conscience and religious discrimination complaint with the Office of Civil Rights in Washington, D.C. against the facility. The nurse's objections to abortion were well known by those who worked there, yet they pulled a fast one on her—she was not told that she had to participate in an abortion until she entered the room.

What this nurse had to endure should never have happened. In 1973, just weeks after the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion in its infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision, Congress enacted the Church Amendment (named after Idaho Senator Frank Church). It prohibited courts and government agencies from forcing healthcare workers from performing an abortion if they morally objected. The vote was 92-1.

In a related case, *Doe v. Bolton*, decided the same day as *Roe*, Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun (he wrote the majority opinion in both cases) took up the question of forcing someone to perform an abortion. He said that "a physician or any other employee has the right to refrain, [410 U.S. 179, 198] for moral or religious reasons from participating in the abortion procedure."

It is a sign of just how sick our society has become that well into the 21st century we are still fighting for the conscience rights of employees who do not want to assist in the killing

of another human being. Even sicker is the prospect of a self-professed Catholic president waiting in the wings to undo all the religious liberty achievements of the Trump administration, including the right to abstain from participating in an abortion.

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## **BURNED BLM BANNERS OUTRAGES THE LEFT**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on reaction to vandalized Black Lives Matter (BLM) banners:

The media and left-wing activists never expressed anger when Catholic churches and iconic Catholic statues were being vandalized and destroyed by Antifa and Black Lives Matter, but now—all of a sudden—they are up in arms over BLM banners being burned outside black churches in Washington D.C. Their selective outrage is stunning.

On December 15, the Associated Press (AP) ran a big piece on the BLM banners. It claimed that black churches were vandalized. They were not. It was BLM banners displayed outside the churches that were burned: The churches themselves were not damaged in any way. By contrast, to cite one example, last spring BLM supporters spray-painted obscenities on the exterior wall of New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Yet there was no comparable outcry from those upset about BLM banners being burned.

To its credit, AP proved to be the most fair of any media outlet. It not only covered the BLM banners that were vandalized, it covered the several instances this year when statues of St. Junípero Serra were toppled by left-wing

activists. Unfortunately, it was an anomaly among the big media. The New York Times and the Washington Post covered the BLM incident but had no news story on the multiple Serra incidents.

The burning of BLM banners was cited by CBS, CNN, Fox News, MSNBC and PBS. Only CBS mentioned the destruction of statues of St. Serra. Moreover, the attack on this heroic priest extended over several months in many cities; it was not just one weekend of violence.

It is not just the smashing of statues of St. Serra that Catholics have endured this year.

In June, the Catholic Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis was set on fire. Catholic churches near the University of Mississippi were vandalized. The Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver was trashed. Windows were smashed in Dallas at St. Jude Chapel and at the Cathedral of the Assumption in Louisville. Swastikas and anti-Catholic scribbling was found on the graves of several Dominican friars on the campus of Providence College.

In July, a statue of Our Blessed Mother was set on fire in Boston and another statue of the Virgin Mary was vandalized in Queens. In Ocala, Florida, a man crashed his minivan into a Catholic church while parishioners gathered for Mass; he then poured gasoline in the church's foyer and set the church ablaze. San Gabriel Mission Church in Los Angeles County was set on fire, destroying parts of the 249-year-old iconic structure. Vandals were charged with a hate crime after they partially disfigured Mission San Jose, a church in Fremont, California.

Also in July, Sacred Heart Catholic school in Gallup, New Mexico was broken into and a statue of Jesus was vandalized. A statue of Jesus was beheaded at Good Shepherd Catholic church in South Florida. "Satanic" and "anarchist" symbols were found

on the church door at St. Joseph's Church in New Haven. In August, Bibles were burned in Portland.

In a sane world, we could all agree that vandalism of any kind is morally wrong. But we don't live in such a world.

Nikole Hannah-Jones, the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist responsible for the New York Times' historically flawed "1619 Project," says, "Destroying property, which can be replaced, is not violence."

David Remnick of the New Yorker is a big fan of BLM. He quotes, with relish, a co-founder of the racist organization. "We don't have time to finger-wag at protesters about property. That can be rebuilt." So could his house if someone torched it.

Two left-wing geniuses, Robin D.G. Kelley, an historian at UCLA, and R.H. Lossin, whose Ph.D. in Communications is from Columbia, both wrote lengthy defenses this past June about the violent Antifa and BLM mobs.

Kelley wrote in the New York Times that because "we are in the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, looting should not surprise anyone." But the looters stole toasters, not bread. They also helped themselves to pricey sneakers and jewelry, neither of which is edible. No matter, he chided the public for "obsessing over looting."

Lossin wrote her screed in the pages of the Nation, a Stalinist media outlet. "Property destruction is not synonymous with the violence that is being protested," she opines. "Plate-glass windows don't bleed." Neither does her laptop. But it's a sure bet she would object if a sledgehammer were taken to it. She is also no fan of non-violence. "The notion that nonviolence is tactically more effective...has not only been proven wrong over the past week by sheer numbers; it cannot be historically supported."

It would be hard to find a single professor of a conservative bent (thanks to the “tolerant-minded” professoriate, there aren’t too many of them) who would belittle property crimes and denounce peaceful protests. Such sages are only found on the Left.

Forgive me if I can’t get too exercised about BLM banners being set on fire. Antifa and BLM burn the American flag, churches, Catholic schools, and cop cars. The media and left-wing activists have no moral ground to stand on when they bash those of us who object to the latter while they go bonkers over the former.

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## **MEDIA ENAMORED OF BIDEN’S FAITH**

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on media reaction to Joe Biden’s faith:

CNN ran a piece December 13 noting that Joe Biden goes to church, prays, and carries a rosary. Right after the election, America, the Jesuit media outlet, commented that Biden prays and carries a rosary. Back in September, NPR observed that Biden uses “biblical language,” prays, is a “deeply devout person of faith,” and, of course, carries a rosary.

The Washington Post is fascinated by Biden’s faith. On November 30th, it noted his “devout Catholicism.” On December 9th, two articles were published on this subject. One mentioned that he goes to church on Sunday and carries a rosary. The other was more pointed: “Joe Biden goes to church. Quietly. Calmly.”

So it is settled. Joe Biden goes to church and carries a rosary. This is empirically verifiable. Clearly the media are enamored of his faith. But why are they so kind?

Recall how the media recently treated another Roman Catholic, Amy Coney Barrett. They were anything but kind. Indeed, her “devoutness” was a source of discontent, even rage in some quarters.

What accounts for the disparate treatment? Biden rejects the teachings of the Catholic Church on abortion—he has become an extremist—marriage (he even officiated at a gay wedding), foster care, gender ideology, healthcare, contraception, sterilization, religious liberty, and school choice. Barrett is in unison with the Church on all of these issues. He has been denied Holy Communion by some priests. She never has.

This is typical of the way the media treat Catholics in public office. Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, John Roberts, Brett Kavanaugh and Sonia Sotomayor are all Catholic, and their Catholicity has been subjected to intense scrutiny, save for Sotomayor. That’s because she is not known for her fidelity to Church teachings on these matters.

The moral of the story is plain: It is perfectly fine to be a Catholic public official just so long as he or she rejects the teachings of the Church on matters of public policy, even when those policies are life and death issues. In other words, it is okay for Catholics to bludgeon the Little Sisters of the Poor provided they carry a rosary.

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# NATIVITY SCENE ERECTED IN CENTRAL PARK

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the Catholic League's nativity scene on public property:

Today, the Catholic League erected a life-size nativity scene in Central Park, on a piece of public property in front of the Plaza Hotel, between 58th and 59th Street on 5th Avenue. We received a permit from the New York City Parks Department, as we have for decades. Sitting nearby is the world's largest menorah, which is also a religious symbol.

There are no Santa Clauses, reindeers, Jack Frosts, or any other secular symbols surrounding our religious display. We don't need to have them. Why? Because Central Park is a public forum, a place that is open to all ideas, concerts, artistic exhibitions, and the like. So the government cannot stop us from erecting our crèche.

So why do some say that religious symbols cannot be displayed on public property unless they are accompanied by secular symbols? They would not be correct if they were referring to a public forum, but they would be correct if they were referring to a swatch of public land near a municipal building, such as city hall.

The difference there is that it could be argued that the proximity of the religious symbols near a municipal entity might be interpreted as government sanction of religion. That argument cannot reasonably be made if the land is a public forum. Practicing Christians, Jews, and others, need to understand the difference so as to avoid unnecessary problems.

We hope that New Yorkers, and those visiting New York City this Christmas season, will stop by and see the Catholic League's nativity scene in Central Park. It will be up through

the New Year.

One more thing. We much prefer our traditional nativity scene to the hip-monstrosity displayed at the [Vatican](#).

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## NATIVITY SCENE VICTORY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue shares a Christmas victory:

The Catholic League was contacted this week by Knights of Columbus Council #275, in upstate New York, about their being denied the right to erect a nativity scene outside the Ulster County office building, something they had done for many years.

On December 9, I wrote a [letter](#) to Ulster County Executive Patrick Ryan explaining why his decision was constitutionally problematic. By allowing a menorah, which is a religious symbol, inside the office building, and a Christmas tree, he cannot deny the display of a nativity scene. We emailed my letter to him and sent it in the overnight mail.

On December 10, I received a phone call from Marc Rider, Deputy County Executive at Ulster County, explaining that a decision was reached to place the nativity scene alongside the menorah and the Christmas tree in the lobby of the building (having the crèche stand by itself outside building might show favoritism for the Christian symbol). I thanked him for his reasonableness.

This is an important victory. The Catholic League is delighted to help the Knights of Columbus. They have some very enthusiastic and courageous people at the local and state



levels.