

BID TO DISCRIMINATE FAILS; QUICK VICTORY

The attempt to discriminate against Christians at a cooperative apartment complex in Westchester County, New York failed. Those who run the cooperative allowed the display of a menorah in the common area, but not a nativity scene. They failed because we intervened.

What makes this story so bizarre is that the same issue took place last Christmas, and in the same building in Larchmont, New York! The only difference is that the building management company is new and the resident who complained is new. But the facts are the same.

Bill Donohue wrote to the new Property Manager company, recounting the story from last year. He said the display of a menorah was "commendable." But he hastened to add, "What is not commendable is the refusal to display a nativity scene. Indeed, it is illegal."

Donohue's letter was dated December 10 and we gave them until December 15 to either display the nativity scene, along with the menorah, or take down the menorah. The letter was emailed to them in the morning of December 10 (and sent in the overnight mail) and that very afternoon they removed the menorah, and a Christmas tree.

They could have settled this issue by simply displaying the crèche, but their idea of neutrality was to ban both the menorah and the manger scene. We prefer the tolerant alternative; they prefer the intolerant option.

"The menorah, like the crèche," Donohue wrote, "is a religious symbol; the Christmas tree is a secular symbol. This is not my opinion—this is the interpretation afforded by the U.S. Supreme Court. So you can either allow all religious symbols

to be displayed, or you can deny both of them: You cannot chose one and deny the other.”

Ironically, it was last year’s confrontation with a different management group that ran this cooperative that led us to contact over 2,000 Homeowner Associations (HOA) in November, alerting them to the religious rights of their residents. We never thought we would have to swing into action again to stop discrimination against Christians in the same cooperative.

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 makes is clear that if one religious symbol is displayed in a common area, others must also be allowed. Supreme Court decisions on the display of religious symbols on public property are also accommodating. This is a serious religious liberty issue.

It is a sad commentary on the co-op board of this property that they thought they could get away with their bigoted stunt two years in a row. But their determination to discriminate was met with our equally determined decision to stop them.

CRÈCHE TAMPERED WITH

In early December, before we erected our nativity scene in Central Park, Bill Donohue told the staff that this was the first time in 30 years that we have displayed our crèche that he was concerned it may not be safe. Regrettably, he was right.

On December 26, a video was posted on Instagram showing a man (assisted by two others) draping a large keffiyeh, a symbol of Palestinian nationalism, on the shoulders of the statue of Our Blessed Mother; he tried to place a Palestinian flag in the hands of Joseph, but failed.

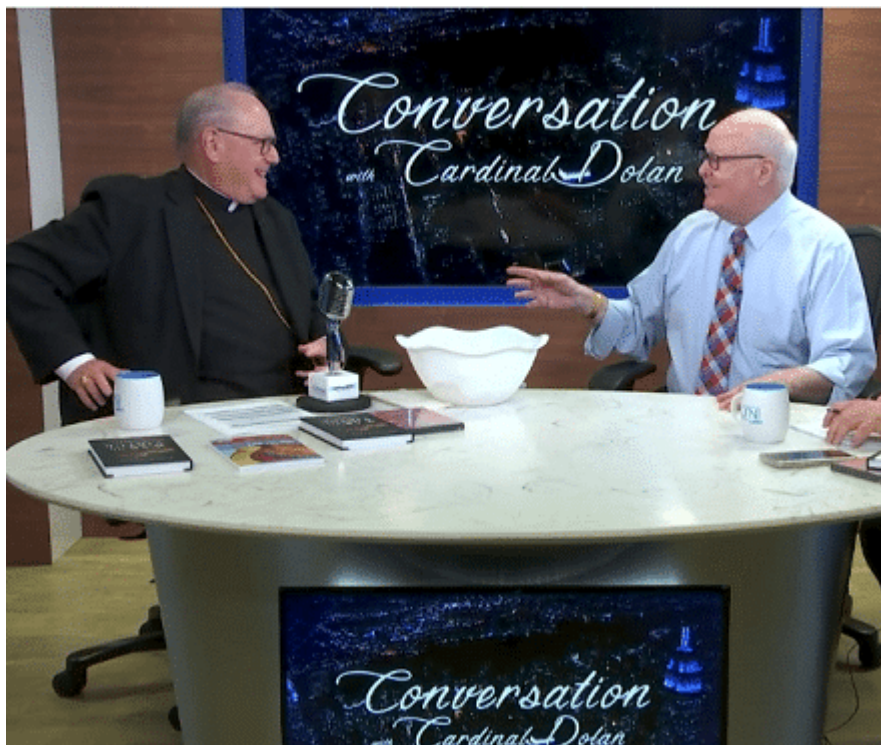
We contacted the New York City Parks Department, which granted us the permit; we also reported this to the police. We did not make a public statement until January 5, the day it was taken down.

What happened is in stark contrast to what happened in 1995. Here is what Donohue wrote in 2015 about that day.

“In 1995, when we displayed our first nativity scene in Central Park, Monsignor John G. Woolsey blessed it in front of our staff. Just as we were about to walk away, a beautiful rainbow appeared above. But it didn’t shine everywhere—it shone directly on our crèche. We take that as a sign that more than the public approves of our display.”

We take that as a sign that we are doing the right thing. That is why what happened this year will not intimidate us one bit.

CARDINAL DOLAN WILL BE MISSED



William A. Donohue

It is an understatement to say that the Catholic League will miss Cardinal Timothy Dolan—he is a very special man. He always fought for justice, and his amiable character won the applause of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. He was certainly very kind to me.

We met for the first time on April 15, 2009, when he was installed as the new Archbishop of New York. I was waiting on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral as he exited, and after he spotted me, he came over to greet me. I told him something he repeated many times—to me and others: "You are my Irish terrier and I am your pit bull."

Though we did not meet until he came to New York, I had a working relationship with Dolan when he was Archbishop of Milwaukee. I mentioned this in my news release of February 23, 2009, the day the news broke that he was selected to run the New York archdiocese.

"In the fall of 2007, the Catholic League launched a boycott and PR campaign against the Miller Brewing Company for its

sponsorship of a vile anti-Catholic gay event, the Folsom Street Fair, in San Francisco. After six weeks of pounding Miller, we got what we wanted: an apology for four anti-Catholic incidents and a pledge not to sponsor the event again.”

We would not have succeeded without the support of Archbishop Dolan. Miller officials complained to him about my campaign against them, but to no avail: he said he was on our side.

Similarly, in 2023, after I registered my objections with Rob Manfred, the Commissioner of Baseball, for allowing the Los Angeles Dodgers to honor an anti-Catholic gay group on “Pride Night,” he called Dolan to protest my public stance. Dolan told him to call me. “I’m sure Bill will be glad to talk to you.” Manfred never called.

Soon after Dolan became Archbishop of New York, he took me to a Broadway play. Later in 2009, he invited the entire board of directors of the Catholic League to have dinner in his residence. His support for our mission was unyielding.

One reason why Dolan was always in our corner was his commitment to the rights of accused priests. It is well known that he has been busy trying to afford just compensation to those who have suffered at the hands of offending priests—almost all the abuse took place decades ago—but less well known is his defense of priests who have been unfairly maligned.

Cardinal Dolan was quickly embraced by his brother bishops. In 2010, he was elected president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He led with distinction, taking on the unfair measures of Obamacare that sought to penalize Catholic non-profits, such as the Little Sisters of the Poor.

It is a tribute to his non-partisanship that he was asked to close both the Democratic and the Republican national conventions. But his fairness never stood in the way of being

outspoken about contemporary issues. He was not tied to the politics of the left or the right.

The Catholic League has come to the defense of many priests, bishops and cardinals, but no one has been consistently more grateful than Cardinal Dolan. Always honest, he does not hold back in expressing his appreciation.

I prize the many radio and TV interviews I did with him. Whenever I had a new book published, he invited me to speak with him. There were other occasions, too, such as his greeting of the homeless on Ash Wednesday outside St. Francis of Assisi, near Penn Station—they are given breakfast—that are memorable. I especially recall him giving me a Coors stein (our favorite beer is Coors Light) a few years ago.

In 2023, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Catholic League at the New York Athletic Club. Cardinal Dolan was the keynote speaker, and he did not disappoint. What stood out the most was not so much his formal comments—it was his discussions with those in attendance. He worked the room, meeting virtually everyone, winning them over with his characteristic jovial demeanor.

Running the New York archdiocese is a daunting task, but it is one that suits the new archbishop. Archbishop Ronald Hicks is young and vibrant, and will be able to put his considerable administrative experience to good use. We look forward to working with him.

It did not take long for Cardinal Dolan to win over the hearts of New Yorkers, and it our sincere hope that Archbishop Hicks will do the same.

PORTLAND IN A PICKLE OVER CHRISTMAS

Portland, Oregon had a hard time handling Christmas in 2025. Bill Donohue sent the following letter to Portland Mayor Keith Wilson on December 2.

I understand you presided over the Christmas Tree lighting ceremony in Pioneer Courthouse Square on November 28. But for some reason— phobia? bigotry?—the word “Christmas” was omitted. This creates a dilemma for you. What are you going to do for the rest of the Christmas season when there are plenty of Christmas celebrations taking place in Portland?

Will you call the Christmas Ships Parade the “Ships Parade”? Will you rename the Tuba Christmas Concert the “Tuba Concert”? Will you change the name of the Silverton Christmas Market to the “Silverton Market”? Will you switch the Singing Christmas Tree to the “Singing Tree”? Now it gets really tricky.

What are you going to do about the gospel singers at Gospel Christmas? Looks like you’ve been checkmated: both words are verboten in super-secular Portland. What are you going to do about the scheduled performance of Handel’s Messiah? Can you really allow the word “Messiah” to be said at Christmastime? In the Old Testament “Messiah” means “the Anointed One,” and in the New Testament it means “Christ.” Moreover, in Part I, the Messiah’s coming and the virgin birth are predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Can this be tolerated in Portland?

Are you aware of the fact that this composition is based on the King James Bible and the Coverdale Psalter? As you know, the former is an early English translation of the Bible, but are you aware that the latter is a 16th century translation of the Psalms, written by Bishop Miles Coverdale? The first lines of Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 carry special meaning to Portland.

Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the man who has not followed the advice of the ungodly," and Psalm 2 reads, "Why do the heathen rage so furiously?" Seems like you are well-suited to provide an answer.

Now for the clincher. What are you going to do about the Christmas Festival of Lights that will take place at The Grotto? This venue is a Catholic sanctuary, formally known at the National Sanctuary of Our Sorrowful Mother. Do you know who she is? Do you know that they allow Masses to be offered at The Grotto, as well as saying the Rosary, and that priests hear confessions? Can this actually be happening in 2025 in Portland?

Looks like you're in a pickle. Either you engage in religious cleansing—scrubbing Portland free of any Christian symbolisms—or you stop with this nihilistic attack on Christianity and let Christians celebrate Christmas, without it being neutered by its enemies.

Something to think about.

Merry Christmas!

We heard from the mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff. We were told that they sang Christmas carols at the event, including religious songs, thus denying any exhibition of bigotry. But there was no mention of why they refused to talk about a Christmas tree, nor did they say why they allowed a pro-Palestinian performance at this Christmas gathering. In short, they tried to hoodwink us. They failed. We thought you'd like to know.

RELIGION SHOWS POCKETS OF OPTIMISM

Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith is the author of *Why Religion Went Obsolete: The Demise of Traditional Faith in America*. Of course, the demise of religion has long been predicted, yet it never seems to die.

A new Pew Research Center survey shows that after a “prolonged period of religious decline,” conditions have stabilized, and this is certainly true of Christianity. More encouraging is the finding that “today’s youngest adults are more religious than today’s second youngest adults.” An earlier survey by the Barna Group came to the same conclusion.

Over the summer, hundreds of thousands of young people from all over the world attended the Jubilee of Youth event in Rome. According to Colm Flynn, an Irish radio and TV host, “When someone told me it was going to be like the Catholic version of Woodstock, I laughed. But as soon as I got there, I thought: OK, now I get it!”

New York City priest, Father Joseph Teller, celebrates Mass on Sunday nights to a crowded audience of young people in Greenwich Village. He notes that the number of converts has tripled in the past year. The same thing is happening at St. Vincent Ferrer on the upper east side. The Basilica of St. Patrick’s Old Cathedral is also witnessing a surge. “We’re out of space and exploring adding more masses,” says Father Daniel Ray.

What’s going on? The spiritual emptiness of the dominant culture is clearly a factor, and it’s widespread. Silicon Valley is bursting with young people looking for meaning in a world enveloped by “God-like” artificial intelligence. They are looking for answers that AI cannot provide.

Catholic commentator Michael Knowles is so encouraged by these new developments that he jokes, “everyone is becoming Catholic.” Father Mike Schmitz, a prominent priest who works with young people, says there has been “a resurgence in people asking the question, ‘How do we become Catholic?’”

Religion ebbs and flows, just like most elements in the culture, which is why sounding the death bells is *always* premature. Young people are proving that prediction wrong.

“DRAG QUEENS” MOCK CHRISTMAS IN FLORIDA

Florida is supposed to be a mostly conservative state, but there are pockets of resistance. What happened at Christmas in Pensacola and St. Petersburg was despicable. Here is an excerpt of what Bill Donohue wrote to officials in both cities on December 1.

Next month we will celebrate the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Imagine having a Ku Klux Klan play being held in your home town a couple of days before? The script mocks, insults and offends African American sensibilities. Let’s up the ante: blacks have to pay for it—it’s being held in a taxpayer-funded theater.

Would it be allowed? Should it be? At the very least, should the authorities tell those who are running this event they are not welcome to use city-owned property to bash African Americans?

This is not scheduled to happen, and hopefully it never will. But there is a bigoted portrayal that mocks, insults and

offends Christian sensibilities being allowed in Pensacola and St. Petersburg. And they are slated to be held in city-owned venues, the Saenger Theatre in Pensacola and the Mahaffey Theater in St. Petersburg (Hard Rock Live in Orlando is also hosting this event, but it is privately owned).

Fortunately, Florida has a responsible Attorney General, James Uthmeier. On November 7 he wrote to Pensacola City Council members, objecting to the hosting of "A Drag Queen Christmas" being performed on December 23 at a theater that Christians are paying for (he is not pursuing the performance held the day before in St. Petersburg, but we are). He wants the City Council to cancel it.

We know what this anti-Christian show is all about. It's been performed many times in Florida.

Some of the depictions include a man in drag holding a Bible draped with a rosary, and others feature demonic fare. In the 2022 Broward County show, men paraded around nude in front of children. In the same year in Orlando, a state agency recorded "acts of sexual content, simulated sexual activity, and lewd, vulgar and indecent displays."

In March 2023, the most detailed news story on what happened in Orlando the previous Christmas was published in the *Miami Herald*. I wrote a piece about it on March 22, 2023. Here's a sample (the quotes are from the reporters, not me).

- The performance featured "shimmying, bare-chested men who wouldn't have been out of place at a Madonna concert"
- It showed a male actor, Jimbo the Clown, "giving birth to a log of bologna and throwing slices to the crowd." The scene was described by state agents, who had it on video, as a "graphic depiction...of childbirth and/or abortion"
- There was a display of "an image of a finger penetrating

a wreath”

- The performance included lyrics to “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” that said, “You know Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen/Vomit the Stupid and Dildo and Dicks-in/But do you recall the most famous reindeer of all?/Screwdolph the Red-Nipped Reindeer had a very shiny bust”

Children as young as six were in attendance. This year the show is for those 18 and older.

It must be emphasized that the Saenger Theatre and the Mahaffey Theater are not public forums. A public forum is a place like a park which is open to virtually everyone—often used by artists, musicians, and other entertainers. Nativity scenes can be erected in such places.

These two venues are owned by the municipality and are therefore subject to greater legal scrutiny.

In the 1984 Supreme Court case, *Lynch v. Donnelly*, the court said, “The Constitution does not require complete separation of church and state; it affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any.”

If the Constitution forbids hostility toward any religion, it is hard to see why a theater, owned by the city and paid for by Christians, can host a show that explicitly exhibits hostility to Christians by trashing one of their most sacred holidays. To put it differently, if it is wrong for the City of Pensacola and the City of St. Petersburg to promote religion, how can it be permissible for them to disparage religion?

Legalities aside, what these LGBT activists are doing is not only obscene, it is a frontal assault on Christian sensibilities at Christmastime, not altogether different from a Klan attack on African Americans as they prepare to honor

Martin Luther King Jr.

We are contacting the Florida governor, the mayors of Pensacola and St. Petersburg, the Pensacola City Council, the St. Petersburg City Council, houses of worship in both cities, Catholic dioceses throughout the state, the Florida Catholic Conference, and local and state media. We are also contacting Catholic League members nationwide to intervene.

What do we want? Ideally, the show's producers should cancel it. But if that is not the case, then the least the City Council in both cities can do is to tell those who are running this event to move it to a facility that is not owned by the taxpayers. Anti-Christian bigotry is offensive enough without making its victims fund it.

We heard from the Attorney General's office and they were very appreciative of what we did. But the authorities in both cities would not budge. It just goes to show that cowardice, if not bigotry, exists in both parties.

KANSAS CITY CENSORS CHRISTMAS

Kansas City, Missouri City Manager Mario Vasquez censored Christmas by forbidding the display of a nativity scene in City Hall. Bill Donohue set him straight when he distorted the issue. Here is the text of his December 12 letter.

You will not be working on Christmas Day. You have the day off. That is because Kansas City is celebrating the birth of Jesus. There is no other reason for closing shop on December 25. Yet you pretend that shutting down the government has nothing to do with Jesus.

You say that your decision to ban the display of a nativity scene (and the display of a menorah to celebrate Hanukkah) in City Hall is being done to “respect the wide range of religious and non-religious beliefs held by our employees, visitors, and residents.” You also say your decision is being done “to honor the separation of church and state.”

You are twice wrong.

If you truly respected religious beliefs, you would not censor Christmas and cancel Hanukkah. So, please, just tell us how you really feel about Christian and Jewish traditions. It is also dishonest to say that your decision is being done “to honor the separation of church and state.” Your grasp of constitutional law is abysmal.

The U.S. Supreme Court has made it clear that religious symbols in public forums, e.g. city parks, are not only permissible, it is illegal to ban them. This explains why the Catholic League currently has a life-size manger scene in Central Park.

Regarding public property that is not a public forum, such as city halls, religious symbols are also permitted, though they must be accompanied by secular symbols (this avoids the appearance of government endorsement of religion).

In other words, you can display a nativity scene and a menorah (we support both), as long as they are accompanied by secular symbols such as a Christmas tree. So don't invoke fidelity to the Constitution to buttress your bigotry.

I could not help but notice that you are boasting about the display of “decorated trees,” and the like, in City Hall. That you couldn't even mention “*Christmas* trees”—you must tremble at the site and sound of the dreaded “C-word”—tells me all I need to know about you.

Cuba also bans Christmas. Why not go there for Christmas? Make

sure you get a one-way ticket.

JIMMY LAI “FOUND” GUILTY

Catholic human rights champion, Jimmy Lai, has been “found” guilty by a three-judge Hong Kong court—there was no jury—of conspiring to endanger national security and conspiracy to publish seditious articles. The 78-year old journalist and businessman had spent over four years in solitary confinement for “destabilizing” the ruling party.

Judge Esther Toh said, “There is no doubt” that Lai “had harbored his resentment and hatred of China for many of his adult years.” Wrong. His resentment and hatred were aimed at the Communist Party, not the country or its people.

The Beijing-led crackdown on protests in 2019 against the Hong Kong regime was criticized by the now defunct *Apple Daily* newspaper, founded by Lai in 1995; ever since he has been in the crosshairs of the Communist Party. His participation in the Tiananmen Square vigil in 2020—to commemorate the freedom fighters who died there in 1989—also angered the Communists.

Beh Lih Yi, the Asia-Pacific director of the Committee to Protect Journalism, said the verdict was a “sham conviction,” a sentiment echoed by many international human rights organizations. Lai had been nominated for a Noble Peace Prize several times.

There was no way Lai was going to be found innocent. What sealed his fate began years ago when the Chinese Communists took control of Hong Kong in 1997. They promised civil liberties for 50 years, but only someone hopelessly naïve was inclined to believe them. After all, this is the same

political party that had murdered tens of millions of its own people under Mao Zedong. They do not take kindly to dissent.

Lai converted to Catholicism in 1997 and was baptized by Cardinal Joseph Zen. The Chinese prelate, who was at the courthouse, has been very critical of the Catholic Church's response to the plight of Catholics in China, saving his harshest comments for Pope Francis. Zen has stood by Lai for many years.

Wall Street Journal journalist Bill McGurn, who is godfather to Lai, has called the Vatican's approach a "disaster." Similarly, Benjamin Rogers, co-founder of Hong Kong Watch, accused Pope Francis of turning a blind eye to what is going on in China. He maintains that the leader of China, Xi Jinping, "wants the Catholic Church to kowtow to the Marxist-Leninist Chinese Communist Party regime."

In October, Pope Leo XIV greeted Lai's wife and daughter after the general audience in St. Peter's Square, but it is not known if the new pope is planning to make a public statement about this matter.

While in custody, Lai was routinely denied the Eucharist. But nothing broke his will. He once told the judges that "[At] the end of the day, the truth will come out in the kingdom of heaven, in the kingdom of God, and that's good enough for me."

Keep Jimmy Lai in your prayers. He is not in good health and will be sentenced January 12. He faces life imprisonment.

TWO FACES OF CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION

As 2025 comes to a close, it is sad to note that Christians are being persecuted in many countries, the extent of which is deeply troubling. There are two faces to this crisis: some of it is violent in nature; some of it is more invidious. All of it is being done by extremists: religious fanatics and secular fanatics.

No one saw this being played out in detail better than Pope Benedict XVI. Faith and reason are critical components to the good society, he counseled, but when either is taken to extremes, it bears ugly fruit. He properly saw Muslim fanaticism as the greatest threat stemming from those whose faith perspective became unhinged from reason; he saw European secular fanaticism as the greatest threat emanating from those whose embrace of reason became unhinged from faith.

The data make it clear that Benedict got it just right.

Pope Leo XIV is correct to note that Muslims are also being slaughtered in Nigeria. But according to the Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa, of the 30,000 civilians killed in a four-year period, roughly 6,000 were Muslims and 17,000 were Christians. At least 7,000 Christians have been killed in 2025—an average of 35 a day—and 19,000 churches have been destroyed. It is radical Muslims in the north who are killing Christians in the southern part of the nation, the lion's share of whom are Catholics.

The other face of Christian persecution is taking place in Europe. We are witnessing what Pope Francis called "polite persecution." Typically, it is "disguised as culture, disguised as modernity, disguised as progress." It centers on thought control. "God made us free," he said, "but this kind

of persecution takes away freedom.” It is the devil, he said, who is the sponsor of “polite persecution.”

What Francis observed is happening in Europe.

The Observatory on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians in Europe (OIDAC Europe) recently released a report noting more than 2,200 anti-Christian hate crimes throughout Europe in 2024. France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and Austria have the worst record. The crimes run the gamut from killings and arson to conscience violations and parental rights abuses.

Who’s committing these offenses? Radical Muslims lead the way, followed by radical left-wing ideologues. No demographic group is more wary of exercising their religious rights than Catholic priests. This is due in no small way to leftwing media portrayals of them. In fact, in the OIDAC survey, 90 percent of respondents said they perceive a consistent media bias against Catholic priests and bishops. Regrettably, 81 percent of priests said they *did not* report anti-Catholic incidents to the authorities.

It is not radical Muslims who are stocking the command centers in Europe. No, it is radical secularists. To be exact, it is the political and cultural elites who are drunk on secular extremism, and it is they who are the masters of “polite persecution.” Here are some examples.

- In France, a Catholic media outlet was fined for reporting that abortion was a “cause of death”
- In Scotland, a Christian midwifery student was suspended from her school after she shared her conscientious objection to abortion in a private Facebook forum
- Scotland has become so extreme that it is warning Christians about restrictions in their homes. If their pro-life activities can be seen or heard from outside, they risk violating the law

- In England, an army veteran was found guilty for silently praying within a designated “buffer zone,” 50 meters from an abortion clinic. He did not speak or engage with anyone
- In Spain, over 20 persons have faced prosecution since 2022 for peacefully praying near abortion clinics
- In Spain, a Christian father who took his child to church, over the objections of the child’s secular mother, was told to stop. He was also told he had no right to read the Bible to his child
- In the Netherlands, Christians have been detained for peacefully distributing pro-life literature outside abortion clinics
- In Finland, a court convicted an elderly Christian couple of “assault” after they prayed with a man about his struggles with sexuality
- In Germany, a crucifix was removed from a state secondary school because he was declared “compulsory, recurring, and unavoidable”
- In Italy, the town mayor of Manduria banned all “on-foot” funeral processions, including traditional funeral bands

There are examples of “soft totalitarianism” in the United States, as well, but on this score, the Europeans win first prize.

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

Michael P. McDonald

As the cultural pendulum swung back towards tradition, reason, and faith, the Catholic League made significant contributions

to the culture war in 2025. There are critical battles still raging, but we gained significant ground this year.

As a parting gift, Joe Biden would give the Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian award, to George Soros, a notorious anti-Catholic bigot who has done more to undermine western civilization and the United States than any single person. While disgraceful, this would be the last major insult from Biden. A few weeks later, President Trump would be inaugurated and the federal government began advancing the cause of religious liberty.

Trump quickly established his Religious Liberty Commission to end the weaponization of the government against Catholics and other people of faith. We eagerly looked for ways to assist the commission. Bill Donohue traveled to Washington to meet with a Department of Justice (DoJ) liaison. The Catholic League staff prepared a report that we shared with DoJ and the senior members of the commission to aid them in their work. This report was praised as the most detailed report on anti-Christian bias that the DoJ received.

Similarly, we renewed our efforts to get to the bottom of the FBI spying on Catholics. We continued to work with House Judiciary Chairman Jim Jordan, and we contacted FBI Director Kash Patel, who pledged to crack down on anti-Catholic bigotry. As part of these efforts, the Trump administration released new documents on this scheme. We learned that the FBI's hostility to Catholics was more widespread than we were initially led to believe.

Another major story was the passing of Pope Francis. On April 21, he died from complications after a long illness. He served as pope for 12 years, leaving behind a mixed legacy. Progressives cheered his emphasis on social justice and his pastoral approach; traditional minded people were outraged by his near ban of the Traditional Latin Mass and other changes he was making, especially regarding the Church's teachings on

sexuality. Of course, Pope Francis' legacy was more nuanced than that and in multiple media appearances we explained that.

As we watched the conclave to select the successor to Pope Francis, we did numerous interviews. On May 8, Pope Leo XIV was elected. As a relatively unknown candidate, we pushed back on the narrative that he would be Francis II. More importantly, we were the first Catholic organization to spring to his defense against trumped up charges from activists claiming he mishandled abuse cases in Peru.

This June, Bill participated in Fidelity Month by making a video about Flag Day and Father's Day. Begun two years ago by Princeton Professor Robert George, Fidelity Month is a time to celebrate God, family and country.

We also sent a letter to Apple TV over a scene in the popular show "Your Friends & Neighbors," which disgustingly mocked the Eucharist. We hit them hard for their defaming the Blessed Sacrament, and since then, there have been no repeat offenses.

Later in the summer, the IRS gave a great boon to religious liberty, when it updated its enforcement of the Johnson Amendment, giving greater freedom to 501(c)(3) organizations to participate in politics. After a Soros-funded "Catholic" organization used the IRS to attack us in 2008, we are glad to know that we won't have the IRS looking over our shoulder even though these changes won't have a substantial impact on how we operate.

When the media were totally silent about a report by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops noting the almost complete eradication of clergy sexual abuse, we highlighted this good news. Unfortunately, more Catholics do not underscore these accomplishments allowing militant secularists to use this issue as a red herring to justify their attacks.

For instance, in Montana and Washington State, politicians tried to break the Seal of Confession alleging priests learn

about abuse through the sacrament. Of course, neither state could point to any evidence that this was a problem. Bill wrote letters to lawmakers in both states. Montana killed their legislation within a week of our intervention, but the rabid secularists in Washington were undeterred. It was only after the DoJ won in court that the assault on Confession stopped.

But, it is not just politicians that use clergy sexual abuse to harangue the Church. *The Free Press* had an article that grievously misrepresents the scandal, making it appear that it is ongoing and far more widespread. This screed should never have been published.

But worse still is the friendly fire from within the Church. We were contacted by lawyers representing the Diocese of Camden. They wanted help to prevent the New Jersey Attorney General from using a grand jury to target the dioceses, which would be contrary to state law.

We were glad to help. Our legal counsel submitted an amicus brief and delivered an oral argument before the New Jersey Supreme Court. Needless to say, we were the only organization to offer any support for the diocese.

But, just one week after the arguments, Bishop Joseph Williams decided to walk away from the case. Even though the diocese had won twice in lower courts, Bishop Williams threw in the towel on defending the due process rights of priests.

We were never contacted by anyone associated with the diocese about this decision. Instead, we found out from a priest in New Jersey. This is the thanks we get for trying to help. Ultimately, the New Jersey Supreme Court decided that the grand jury could proceed.

Another instance of friendly fire occurred when Brooklyn Bishop Emeritus Nicholas DiMarzio was sold out by the Archdiocese of Newark, after it agreed to shell out hundreds

of thousands of dollars to two men who accused the bishop of abuse, even though a Vatican investigation cleared him of all wrongdoing.

Transgenderism remained a critical issue. We published approximately 25 articles and reports pushing back on this anti-Catholic and antiscientific ideology, focusing on its inherently violent nature. While we dealt it serious blows, the elites and the secular-left are still wed to this issue. This is not only harmful to the poor people who have been seduced by transgenderism, it is also dangerous to everyone around them. Tragically, we saw that on several occasions.

On the morning of August 27, Robert Westman, a man who pretended to be a woman, opened fire on Catholic school children attending Mass at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis. Two children were tragically killed by this transgender extremist. Many in the media and political life tried to spin his biography to suggest that it wasn't his adherence to transgenderism or hatred for Church teachings that prompted this attack. We quickly set the record straight.

Two weeks later, on September 10, a man, who identified as a furry online and in a relationship with a man who thought he was a woman, shot and killed Charlie Kirk at a rally at Utah Valley University. Kirk was assassinated because he was an outspoken Christian, and the shooter and his boyfriend held a deep animus for Kirk's Christian message.

These incidents highlight why the fight against transgenderism remains so pivotal.

We were also involved in several other cultural battles.

We marked the 10 year anniversary of the New York St. Patrick's Day parade allowing LGBT groups to march under their own banner with Bill recounting the betrayal.

Higher education remained a hotbed of culture war activity. At

Columbia, a Catholic Ph.D. candidate faced disciplinary actions for making comments on social media that accurately reflected Church teachings. Meanwhile, Northwestern offered an "Introduction to Christianity" class that was nothing more than an assault on the Catholic Church. At St. John's University in New York, a law student verbally abused Cardinal Dolan. We vigorously called out the guilty parties and asked for the situations to be remedied.

We also took an in-depth look at the data on assisted suicide. Needless to say, the most secular states in the nation lead the way in this horrific trend, and this will continue to grow into a major flashpoint in the culture wars. We were able to get out in front of this battle and laid down a crucial marker.

Politically, one of the biggest events was the election of Zohran Mamdani to be New York City Mayor. Bill authored an 18-page report unmasking Mamdani's phoniness. We made several other statements and media appearances warning of the threat Mamdani poses to religious liberty. Unfortunately, New York is too far gone, and Mamdani won. Worryingly, his victory may set a pattern that the left might use across America. Not to be deterred, we started a comprehensive "Mamdani Watch" to track what he is doing, providing a check to his hostility to people of faith.

We scored a big victory when we convinced Sen. Dick Durbin to decline a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Archdiocese of Chicago. We were the only lay Catholic organization to press Durbin to turn down the award. We sent him several letters pointing out that most of the policies he supported were contrary to Catholic teaching. The tipping point came once we provided the email of his chief of staff, and our subscribers to pound away. One day later, Durbin yielded.

The war on Christmas remains a critical flashpoint.

Initially, we sought to run a billboard in Washington with the message, "Christians Take Note. *Religious Liberty is Thriving Again*. Celebrate Christmas Like Never Before!"

Unfortunately, we were informed that D.C. bureaucrats would not approve the message unless we removed "Christians." We refused to bend to these dictates and looked for a new way to promote religious liberty.

We often get complaints from members about homeowners associations (HOA) being too restrictive with religious symbols at Christmas. To counter this, we took the resources we were planning on using for the D.C. billboard and used that to contact over 2,000 HOA officials asking them to respect the religious rights of the people in their communities. This helped minimize the attacks on religious liberty this Christmas.

We called out officials in Portland, Oregon, who used their Christmas tree lighting ceremony to promote woke causes. We contacted officials in St. Petersburg and Pensacola, Florida, about a drag show that mocked Christmas that was using city-owned theaters for the performances. We once again had to battle with a co-op in Larchmont that refused to display a crèche alongside a menorah. Like last year, they chose to be intolerant and have no decorations, but at least we were able to end the anti-Christian discrimination. We also continued our decades-long tradition of displaying a life-sized nativity scene in Central Park.

Just days before Christmas, it was announced that the Vatican accepted Cardinal Dolan's resignation. His support of our mission was unyielding. We will miss our close relationship with him and look forward to getting acquainted with his successor.

Looking back, 2025 was a banner year. We made great strides in advancing religious liberty and pushed back on anti-

Catholicism. While we reclaimed significant ground in the culture war, there are still critical battles ahead. As we look forward to 2026, we will keep pushing the advantage and joyfully look forward to the fights and, more importantly, the victories to come.