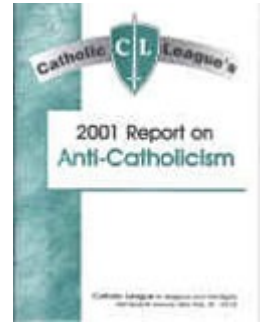


The Arts

January

Houston, TX – Beginning in mid-December 2000 and running through mid-January, the Redbud Gallery in Houston, TX had an art exhibit titled, “Sextablos: Works in Metal.” “Sextablos” featured many pornographic images, including a work by Michael Thompson that shows a naked woman performing fellatio on Christ nailed to the cross. “Sextablos” is a play on the Spanish word “retablo,” which are Mexican paintings of the saints on sheets of tin. A book of the display was also available from Bad Books Press.



January 20-21

Pittsburgh, PA – A production of Terrence McNally’s “Corpus Christi” was staged by the Provoke Theatre Project in Pittsburgh. The play depicts a Christ-like figure that has sex with the Apostles. According to Thom McLaughlin, company founder, Provoke Theatre’s goal is to produce contemporary, cutting-edge, thought-provoking theater. McNally’s play was critically panned when it ran for a short time in New York City.

February 16

Brooklyn, NY – At the Brooklyn Museum of Art, a display featuring contemporary black photographers includes the color photo “Yo Mama’s Last Supper” by Renee Cox. The photograph shows the artist appearing in full frontal nudity as Christ in the Last Supper. In the fall of 1999, the Brooklyn Museum of Art had displayed in its “Sensation” exhibit a dung-splattered Virgin Mary surrounded by pornographic images. Cox explained her work as aimed at the Catholic Church, blaming the Church for slavery. On several past occasions Cox has used Catholic imagery in an offensive manner. She portrayed a castrated Christ on the Cross and she appeared half naked as the Blessed Mother holding a Christ-like figure in her work, “The Pieta.”

She also posed as a nun with a naked woman kneeling before her in prayer. Catholic League president William Donohue debated Cox at the First Amendment Center in New York, asking if she would object to an offensive portrait of Martin Luther King, Jr. displayed in a public library during Black History Month. She took great umbrage at his mere suggestion. Joining the critique of Cox and the Brooklyn Museum were Edward Cardinal Egan of New York and New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

February 25

Santa Fe, NM – An exhibit opened at the Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe titled “Cyber Arte: Where Tradition Meets Technology.” One entry, a photo collage by Alma Lopez, was called “Our Lady.” It replaces the traditional image of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe with a woman in a rose petal bikini. A bare-breasted woman appeared below her in place of a cherub. The museum is a state facility supervised by a board of regents. Archbishop Michael Sheehan of Santa Fe and local parishioners called the art “blasphemous,” and the Catholic League joined in the protest. At an April 16 meeting attended by more than a thousand protestors, Father Terry Brennan of Holy Trinity parish in Arroyo Seco compared the museum’s treatment of Our Lady of Guadalupe to a sports team callously using Indian mascots.

April 8

Great Barrington, MA – At the Mahawei Theater, a performance group called “Bread and Puppet” put on a play titled “Insurrection Mass with Funeral Marches for Rotten Ideas: A Non-Religious Service with Paper Mache Gods.” The puppet performance included secular scripture readings, a fiddle sermon and a parody of the Mass. The performance was sponsored by the Community Health Center of the Berkshires and the Rail Road Street Youth Project, both of which receive funding from the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen.

April 17

Chicago, IL – A play by Romulus Linney titled “Ambrosio” was

performed at The Great Best Theater in Chicago. The play centers on a 16th-Century monk in Spain who has sex with both men and women. There is Catholic imagery throughout the play, including a male novice with whom the monk has sex and who looks like the Virgin Mary.

April 18

Stamford, CT – At the University of Connecticut a one-woman play was presented, “The Second Coming of Joan of Arc,” by Carolyn Gage. In answer to the question, “Whose God is it anyway?” the playwright responds that the saint is “the cross-dressing butch with the smart mouth.”

April

New York, NY – A mural featuring a totally naked Jesus on the cross was to open at New York’s JFK International Airport. Contacted by the Catholic League, airport officials had the art properly covered with a loincloth. The story was eventually covered in Newsday where it was reported that airport officials did not wish to get into a confrontation with the Catholic League.

May 3

Erie, PA – Terrence McNally’s play “Corpus Christi,” depicting a Christ-figure who has sexual relations with the Apostles, began at the Roadhouse Theater in Erie. In a review in the Erie Times-News, contributor Su Harrington, while acknowledging protests of the play by the Catholic League, wrote that “in a culture that left Matthew Shepard dead, crucified against a Wyoming fence for being gay, McNally’s message deserves some thought.” Thus did he justify McNally’s anti-Catholicism.

May 17

New York, NY – Christie’s auctioned one of two versions of “The Ninth Hour” by Maurizio Cattelan. The art depicts Pope John Paul II being crushed by a meteorite while clutching his crozier. While the art is open to interpretation, the artist

has stated that it is a “little” anti-Catholic. Christie’s, which played an integral role in the “Sensation” exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, hyped “The Ninth Hour” on the cover of its spring catalogue.

August

Fort Wayne, IN – Terrence McNally’s play “Corpus Christi” was performed at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. The publicly funded university, while not paying for the production, hosted the play nonetheless. Eleven state lawmakers joined with local residents to file a lawsuit to try to stop the school from hosting the play. The Catholic League, rejecting what it saw as censorship, instead chose other means of protest—namely, the distribution of a statement to every theater-goer explaining the objections to the anti-Catholic play. The lawsuit was eventually dismissed and the statement of protest was distributed at every performance.

September 17

Cambridge, MA – The American Repertory Theater and the Provincetown Playhouse presented a monologue of a play by Dario Fo called “John Padan and the Discovery of the Americas.” Markland Taylor of Variety described the work by saying, “Dario Fo enjoys taking potshots at the status quo, and in this somewhat Swiftian monologue he takes great glee in rewriting history and giving the shaft to the Spanish Conquistadors and the Roman Catholic Church.”

October

Maitland, FL – The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland hosted an art exhibit by Fritz Hirschberger titled, “Indifference-The Sur-Rational.” Hirschberger, a Holocaust survivor, uses art to blame the Catholic Church for the Holocaust.

One of his displays is called “The Last Supper at Evian or The Fish Stinks First From The Head.” Its depiction of the Last Supper shows delegates who met at Evian, France and did nothing to protect the Jews. There is a portrayal of three

clerics titled, "The Sun and the Moon Shine on All: The Mute, The Blind, The Deaf." Another piece is "The Concordat," a portrait of a Nazi and a cardinal, with a caption that essentially says the Catholic Church sold out the Jews by getting in bed with the Nazis. Other representations project the same theme.

October 5

Newport, OH – The Shawdowbox Cabaret opened its show at the Newport on the Levee Entertainment Center. A reviewer in the Cincinnati Post wrote, "There's not much topical comedy, either. The only satire present is 'Monty Python's Catholic Sketch,' which offers some wry musical comment on the church's objection to birth control. A large Roman Catholic family sings, 'Every Sperm is Sacred.'"

October 7

Westchester, NY – The play "Reefer Madness" opened at the Variety Arts Theatre. A reviewer in the Journal News wrote, "One character who has two big numbers here is Jesus Christ, who is portrayed as a cheesy Elvis type in silver lamé with a glistening smile. At one point he throws Communion wafers into the audience saying, 'Body of me.' This is unbelievably offensive, which it presumably was intended to be."

October 27

Morris, MN – Ventriloquist David Malmberg performed in Morris for the Stevens Community Medical Center. His act was replete with sexual innuendo followed by jokes about priests and nuns. Stevens Community Medical Center officials notified Malmberg that they would never hire him again nor would they ever recommend him to another organization.

November

Baltimore, MD – The Baltimore Museum of Art gift shop sold postcards that featured Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ." The sale was going on at the same time the museum removed a painting by Christopher Wool called, "Terrorist." Museum

officials said the Wool piece was removed “out of respect to visitors sensibilities.”

After a statement to the news media regarding the offensive postcards, the issue became a hot topic on Baltimore talk radio. Subsequently, a listener went to the museum and bought the remaining cards.

November 3

West Warwick, RI – Dave Kane performed his one-man play “Misgivings” at Evelyn’s Villa. A reviewer wrote, “Some have called Dave Kane’s one-man-playing-priest show, Catholic-bashing. And there’s no doubt that Kane has lots of issues to take up with the church, and sometimes he’s pretty angry.”

November 30

Somerville, MA – The Somerville Theater presented Faith Soloway’s, “Jesus Has Two Mommies.” It was also performed on December 21 and 22 at Boston’s Copley Theater.

Called a “multi-media schlock opera,” the performance features Ms. Soloway, who plays herself, and Christine Cannavo, who plays her pregnant Irish-Catholic girlfriend; the two women join in a “commitment ceremony.” Ms. Soloway meets Jesus who assuages her fears about her non-traditional relationship: he admits to having two mommies, Mary and Josephine.

When Faith Soloway was asked why a Jewish lesbian was staging a play starring Jesus, she replied that Jesus “is the most absorbed, he’s like the icon of the Bible” and that around Christmastime he is “sort of the star.” She described her own work as “holding up my middle finger at some of our social constructions.”

December 12

Boston, MA – Boston Center for the Arts hosted a series of short plays called “The Xmas Files.” Among the plays were “Interview with a Virgin” which imagines an interview between the Virgin Mary and her au pair. Toward the end of the series of plays, playwright Jan Davidson appears as the Mary character, hosting a funeral for her son. She receives a call

on her cell phone—which she retrieves from under her habit—and
the declares, “There’s been a development.”