



CATHOLIC LEAGUE

For Religious and Civil Rights

Activists

1998

Oregon – Throughout the campaign on Oregon’s assisted suicide referendum, supporters of assisted suicide targeted the Catholic Church for vicious attack. Among the more heinous examples:

Barbara Coombs Lee, the state’s chief petitioner in favor of assisted suicide, charged that the Oregon state legislature had been “taken hostage” by “the raw political power of the Catholic Church.

Auxiliary Bishop Kenneth Steiner of Portland, who as archdiocesan administrator took a lead in espousing the Church’s opposition to assisted suicide, was the target of hate mail and vandalism, including having a hunk of cement thrown through his office window, and the word “Satan” spray-painted over lawn signs at his parish.

A group called Don’t Let Them Shove Their Religion Down Your Throat Committee disparaged the Catholic Church and challenged the Church’s right to be involved in the state’s assisted suicide debate.

Winter

Arlington, VA – A doctor, who attended the National Practitioner Conference, presented a slide presentation on Hepatitis C in which one slide showed a man crucified to a cross with his groin draped and a doctor listening to his liver. The doctor subsequently apologized.

January 20

The executive director of the Hemlock Society attacked Catholicism in a letter to *American Medical News*, the official newspaper of the American Medical Association. She questioned the right of the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin to publicly oppose physician assisted suicide, arguing that he should cease from trying to “foist the Church’s views on others.” She further labeled the Church’s teaching on abortion as “authoritarian” and made it clear that she rejected the right of the Church to pronounce on such matters.

March 20

San Francisco, CA – ACT UP activist Tom Ammann mocked the archbishop, stating that “I had to go to his rectory, which is Latin for ‘rectum.’” The *San Francisco Bay Times* flagged other remarks that were similar, including one by Gil Block, a.k.a. Sadie Sadie the Rabbi Lady, who commented, “our enemies . . . have become enlightened through the efforts of ACT UP.”

April

A member of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), objecting to animal research at the Catholic institution, Boys Town, dressed up as Satan and held forth in protest on the roof of the Catholic hospital.

April 5

Pittsburgh, PA – The Ku Klux Klan organized a rally in Pittsburgh and called for Catholics to join in their cause, despite the Klan’s long history of anti-Catholic terrorism and disparaging philosophical tenets.

May 21

Long Island, NY – The major sponsors of a conference on “Reducing Prejudice: A Matter of Education,” themselves provided what league president William Donohue called “a textbook case of prejudice—and discrimination—against Catholics,” by censoring display of the League’s monthly journal, *Catalyst*, and its Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism. The American Jewish Congress Center for Prejudice Reduction and the Suffolk Association for Jewish Educational Services contended that the journal and annual report were “too strident” to be presented to the Bi-County Conference for Educators, which held the

conference. Further investigation by the league uncovered several additional reasons why the two Jewish groups censored the materials: disagreement with the league on the issues of abortion and school vouchers, and an item in our Annual Report about a Jewish person who had objected to having a crucifix in his room at a Catholic hospital. The American Jewish Congress ultimately refunded the money which the league had paid as a sponsor of the conference.

November 10

New York, NY – Catholics for Contraception, identified as “a project” of the pro-abortion Catholics for a Free Choice, ran an ad in the New York Times showing a bishop’s miter, with the headline, “Worn correctly, it can prevent unintended pregnancy, AIDS, and abortion.” The ad went on to excoriate the U.S. bishops for upholding Church teaching against artificial birth control, and for opposing “government funding for international family planning aid for the world’s poor.” The ad failed to mention, of course, that the bishops’ opposition was to the use of such “family planning” funds to promote abortion.

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