



The Catholic Civil Rights League

www.ccrl.ca

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Keep Christmas symbols in public spaces

During the Christmas season, it's important to assert our right to religious decorations and symbols, as the religious origins of Christmas are the "reason for the season" for so many of us. Even the occasional vandalism of nativity scenes or other Christmas decorations should not stop us from making the effort.

Commenting on the vandalism of the nativity scene at Toronto's City Hall, Suresh Dominic, founder and head of Gethsemane Ministries, which sponsors the scene, said: "It is disappointing to see the intolerance toward Christianity in our city," Dominic remarked. "I hope Canadians will realize that this hatred destroys the joy and peace that everyone looks for in this season."

"This is a time of joy and peace, as you see the entire city of Toronto gearing up for this Christmas season, and this ruins everyone's peace," he said.

The tradition of a nativity scene in front of Toronto's Old City Hall dates back to 1996, when the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild obtained a permit to set up a crèche display. In the succeeding years the crèche, with its depiction of the true origins of the Christmas season, has been a focal point for families, who often stop to take photos while visiting other downtown Toronto landmarks.

Commenting on the tradition of nativity scenes in early December, Pope Benedict XVI has said, "I imagine that, in your homes, you are putting the final touches to your nativity scenes, which are such an evocative depiction of Christmas. I hope that this important element, not only of our spirituality but also of our culture and art, may endure as a simple and eloquent way to remember the One Who came 'to dwell among us'."

Joanne McGarry, Executive Director of the Catholic Civil Rights League (CCRL), told LifeSiteNews that the vandalism of nativity scenes is not a new problem, but it shows "a lack of respect for religious symbols in the public square."

"Nativity scenes are a cherished symbol for many people," Ms. McGarry said. "They are at the centre of the Christian celebration of Christmas. This vandalism is very regrettable, but it should not stop Gethsemane Ministries and all the other organizations involved with nativity scenes from setting up their crèches every year. We need to keep this symbolism in the public square."

Fortunately, many government departments sent out a directive this year reminding employees they are free to decorate their workspaces with suitable religious decorations during the holiday season. While many atheists will continue to complain about any religious symbols in public or even semi-public spaces, it's refreshing to see some common sense prevail.

Similarly, while we're free to criticize stores that are reluctant to say "Christmas" in their advertising and their in-store greetings, the simpler solution is to wish a "Merry Christmas" to those we buy from, but also to happily accept any and all greetings in the spirit in which they're intended. In a season where the happy times are too often offset by a harried feeling of overspending, or not having enough time, a simple wish for good times should be welcomed.



Loyola decision infringes on parental choices, says CCRL

MONTREAL, QC December 6, 2012 – The Catholic Civil Rights League today commented on the decision of the Quebec Court of Appeal that requires Loyola High School, a private Catholic institution, to teach the province's Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) course. The school had asked to cover the course material in a religion program based on its Catholic perspective, a request which was upheld by the Quebec Superior Court but appealed by the province.

The Court of Appeal decision, issued December 4, declared that because Loyola's course is Catholic in orientation, it could not be considered equivalent to the ERC program, because the ERC course was specifically designed to be religiously "neutral".

"With this decision, the Court of Appeal has seriously infringed upon the right of parents to direct the religious education of their children," says League President Philip Horgan.

In 2008, the Education Minister at the time, Michelle Courchesne, refused to declare that the course in Morals and World Religions at Loyola High School in Montreal was equivalent to ERC, arguing that the program offered by the school was given from a Catholic viewpoint whereas the ethics and religious culture approach must be "secular". The school took the case to Quebec's Superior Court. In June 2010, the Superior Court reversed the decision of the minister and the school was allowed to teach its substitute program as equivalent. The Court of Appeal has overturned that decision and upheld the original decision of the Minister of Education.

This decision creates a dilemma for Catholic parents in Quebec, who may seek to send their children to a private Catholic school to avail their children of an authentic moral and religious upbringing in accordance with their faith, a right recognized and guaranteed by several international treaties to which Canada is a party, and which a robust understanding of the Charter of Rights would normally recognize.

In February, the Supreme Court of Canada decided [in the case of S.L.](#) that sufficient evidence would be needed to support a finding for an exemption from the ERC curriculum. Loyola produced the requests for exemption on behalf of its entire school community, supported by expert opinions on the merits of its program as compared to the Quebec ERC curriculum. The trial judge accepted that

position, stating at one point that the Quebec government's position was verging on totalitarianism.

With this ruling, the Court of Appeal has chosen to overrule the trial judge's decision, which was based on extensive expert evidence, in favour of the ambitions of the Quebec government, which stated that its program was better suited for greater tolerance in society.

Quebec continues to engage in a grand social experiment, over the legitimate objections of religious parents. The Association of Catholic Parents of Quebec (APCQ) deplors the fact that everywhere in Quebec, children 6 to 16 years will be introduced, through the ERC course, to a set of amalgamated religions, beliefs, myths and legends. The President of the APCQ, Jean Morse-Chevrier, who is also a Quebec director of the League, believes this teaching devalues religion in favour of a phenomenalist and relativistic approach. She says that the judgment gives more clout to a government that devalues the religious rights of its citizens and their institutions.

The CCRL hopes that the Supreme Court is invited to review its previous ruling on the ERC curriculum in the context of the Loyola experience.

Support growing for Motion 408

OTTAWA, ON November 23, 2012 – Petitions are now available in support of Motion 408, which calls on the House of Commons "to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination."

The motion, introduced by MP Mark Warawa (PC- Langley) in late September following the failure of Motion 312, cites numerous studies showing that the practice of aborting females due to a cultural preference for males is happening among certain communities in Canada, and that 92 per cent of Canadians believe such abortions should be illegal.

"Gender selection has been strongly condemned by all national political parties," said Mr. Warawa. "As well, the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada have vehemently opposed sex-selective pregnancy termination."

The League has called for an end to the practice many times in the past, noting that the combination of education and a new law are required to guarantee true equality among the unborn, the most vulnerable population.

A downloadable petition for your signature is available through Mr. Warawa's website (<http://www.markwarawa.com>.) A petition that can be signed online or downloaded is available through Campaign Life Coalition. It is also important to express your support to MPs through phone calls, letters or e-mails.

Bill C-270 at Committee stage

OTTAWA, November 22, 2012 - Bill C-279, an Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Criminal Code (gender identity and gender expression), arrived for hearing before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights November 20. The bill, introduced by MP Randall Garrison (NDP – Esquimalt-Juan de Fuca), had its second reading last spring and will return to the House of Commons for final reading and vote following committee study. The bill would add gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds under the federal human rights code and Criminal Code, but does not actually define the terms.

This bill would add a very subjective category – i.e., what gender someone BELIEVES him- or herself to be – to the objective list of grounds under which discrimination is already prohibited. To add a category that is essentially self-defined would put employers and others who must help uphold human rights law in a very difficult position. If passed, this Bill would also make it legal for males who believe themselves to be female to access women's washrooms. In the main, legal experts agree that discrimination against the transgendered is already covered by laws protecting gender and sexual orientation. In addition to sending letters to your MP expressing concerns about this unnecessary proposed change, MP Rob Anders is [hosting a petition](http://www.robanders.ca) (<http://www.robanders.ca>) against it that you may wish to consider signing.

League to participate in prostitution appeal

The Catholic Civil Rights League is pleased to learn that the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) has allowed an appeal in the Ontario Court of Appeal ruling eliminating some of Canada's prostitution laws. Leave to appeal and leave to cross-appeal have been granted by the SCC without costs. The motion to stay the decision of the

Court of Appeal until the Supreme Court renders its judgment was also granted.

The Ontario Court of Appeal ruling retained the prohibition against soliciting for prostitution, but lifted the prohibition on keeping a common bawdy house and living off the avails. While the Ontario ruling only applies in Ontario, a Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) decision would apply nationwide. In announcing the appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada in April, Justice Minister Rob Nicholson said: "It is our position that the Criminal Code provisions are constitutionally sound, and denounce and deter the most harmful and public aspects of prostitution."

Joanne McGarry, League executive director, says the appeal will help give voice to the concerns of many Canadians that a more liberal prostitution law will prove harmful to women and girls and harmful to the family as well as make Canada an easier place for human traffickers to operate. The 2010 Ontario Superior Court Ruling struck down all three prostitution laws that were part of the case, arguing that provisions against soliciting, living off the avails and keeping a common bawdy house should be legalized because they placed unconstitutional restrictions on prostitutes' ability to take safety measures such as hiring security to protect themselves.

Media Watch

The CBC Radio One weekly program "Day 6" is having a contest called "Deep Sixed" in which people can vote for or against the elimination of several things, including Facebook, maple syrup, Bluefin tuna, the Catholic Church and "white people." This was obviously intended as a joke, but we challenged why they would include the Church in a satirical contest of this kind. We encouraged our members to contact them about this bizarre choice, and suggested that "CBC funding" might be a better option! Following our protest, program managers said they had decided to remove the Church from the list, replacing it with a discussion of various countries' economic problems.

Visit our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/CatholicCivilRightsLeague) for interactive content of interest to League supporters.

Let the League know: If you see articles, notices of TV programs or other media content that you believe have serious anti-Catholic content, please contact us at ccrl@ccrl.ca to help us evaluate and respond in a timely way.

League News

We enjoyed a pleasant and informative annual meeting Oct. 24 in Toronto, including a talk by Father Tom Lynch, national director of Priests for Life Canada. In a wide-ranging talk about the need for political and social initiatives in support of life, Father Tom reminded us of the importance of keeping our eye on the goal of respect for all life, the need to recognize that we will sometimes disagree among ourselves about the means, and the importance of supporting pro-life legislative initiatives that keep the debate alive and thus may help build pro-life support. Quoting from the encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, Father Tom addressed the question of incremental legislation, noting that Pope John Paul II identified a situation (where one law, though imperfect, is better than another either proposed or already on the books) where a Catholic can in good conscience support a less than ideal law provided (s)he makes his or her complete pro-life conviction known.

The League's annual report, including financial and annual activity statements, was presented at the meeting. Please contact us (ccrl@ccrl.ca or 416-466-8244) if you would like a copy.

Mark your calendars: If you live in the Toronto area, or are planning to visit next May, please set aside Thursday May 30 for our annual dinner and presentation of the Archbishop Exner Award for Catholic Excellence in Public Life. More details to follow.

League paper presented: As reported in our last newsletter, the League presented a paper on parental rights in education at the recent conference of the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars. The paper will be published in a future edition

of the fellowship's journal, and is also available on our website under "Articles of Interest."

Chapter contacts

For upcoming meetings of our *Windsor-Essex chapter* contact Bob Baksi at robert@baksi.com.
Antigonish chapter: Contact Don Maclellan, chapter president, at maclellan_donald@yahoo.ca for details. From September to June the chapter meets the first Tuesday of each month.

St. Catharines Chapter: Contact Justin O'Donnell at jus-tinodonnell@cogeco.ca.

The League is pleased to address parish and school groups in regions where we have a director available. Contact Joanne at 416-466-8244 or ccrl@ccrl.ca for more information. We have information and membership brochures available for parish events and literature racks. We would be happy to send you some upon request.

Development update

Thank you for your most generous response to our Fall development appeal. We are now close to our goal. If you were planning to donate at this time but have not yet done so, please send your donation as soon as possible to help us continue our work. For your convenience, you can [donate online](#) or by mail to CCRL Suite 1000, 120 Eglinton Ave. East, Toronto M4P 1E2. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

We greatly appreciate your referrals of new members to the League, as we need to continue to grow our support base in order to be effective as well as to keep fundraising appeals to a reasonable level.

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Support the League

We rely completely on your generosity to continue our work. Gifts can be made online (www.ccrl.ca) or by mail to CCRL, 1000 – 120 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, ON M4P 1E2., using this convenient form:

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