Howdy! Well we have lots to discuss so let’s start right off with some good news. On January 14, 2007, your ACA board of directors unanimously voted to purchase a sign with Keep Austin Beautiful that will advertise our Adopt A Street. We’re lining up volunteers to help pick up trash along the half mile stretch that we’re going to adopt, somewhere in North Austin. It’s easy, fun, and the sign will give us outside advertising for a really low price. For a one time cost of $137. We will get a sign with our group name on it, under a Keep Austin Beautiful Adopt A Street sign. We’re sure you’ve seen this type of sign all over Austin. Many different groups already adopt streets in Austin, and we’d be joining a list of some pretty well known groups here in Austin. Folks will be able to see our group name listed with other groups that adopt streets, at the KAB website, and we’ll get that very valuable outdoor advertising with the sign. That sign will remain up for a minimum of two years, which is a great deal for advertising like that.

As a proud Atheist, I like to brag about how I also do volunteer work in the neighborhood I live in as it is. It’s easy for me to shift some of that effort over to our Adopt A Street. It’s also a new opportunity to help clean up our town a bit. We have the most beautiful city in the world, and it takes vigilance to keep it that way. We Atheists need to be recognized for our helpful attitudes and efforts, and this sign will help in that, in a small way.

If you’d like to help in that effort, please let us know. Again, it’s fun! We’re also trying to replace the cost of that sign, so if you’d like to donate to the group to help us make that a very simple hurdle, please do so.

Correction: In last month’s issue, we mistakenly reported that ACA Board member Don Rhoades gave ten gallons of blood. We should’ve said he gave FIVE gallons. Sorry about that, but still, that’s a lot of blood.

We’ll be having our Atheist Community of Austin Birthday Meeting at Ventana Del Soul on Sunday February 11, 2007. Our group turns ten years old this year, and we are so proud! At that meeting, ACA President, Matt Dillahunty will give his State of the ACA Address. We’ll also be hearing from some of the original founding members of the group about the early days. It’s also a great opportunity to meet the new leadership of the group. We’ll be discussing our history, some of our most enjoyable events, our accomplishments, and our future. We’re in for a lot of growth and change this year, and 2006 was one of our best years on record. It’s a beautiful day to be an Atheist in Austin.

At January’s board meeting, we also created a Building Committee, and placed Board Member Keith Berka in charge of that. If you’d like to be on that committee, or if you just have ideas about what kind of building we should get, let us know. Here are the decisions we’ve made so far on that: 1. We want to buy, not rent. 2. We want a building, not a portion of a building. 3. We want a property tax exemption, and we want to house a library on the property, to get the exemption and to have a library facility.

So far we are also considering buying land and then building on it, as well. These and many MANY other issues will have to be tackled, so please let us know your opinions. All ACA members should express opinions on this. We need this to be the best move for the entire ACA membership.

Happy Darwin Day! Feb 12, 2007

CHARLES ROBERT DARWIN

February 12, 1809 to April 19, 1882

At www.darwinday.org, you can learn about how lots of freethought groups are celebrating and educating with the vibrant spirit that Mr. Darwin himself showed in his everyday life. If you’re interested in learning about evolution, we strongly suggest this website: talkorigins.org

We’re also very proud to report that the ACA was invited to send a representative to Huston-Tillotson College in east Austin, to speak to a senior sociology class, about Atheism. That talk took place on January 31, so a report on that will have to wait for our next issue.

A very good article about well known Atheists who are speaking out for reason and rationality was done by Religion and Ethics News Weekly on PBS. They also did a nice video on the issue. You can see that here: www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1019/cover.html

A growing number of celebrities are coming out of the closet as non-religious people who still care about humanity. Lately, some news reports have implied that Atheism is on the rise as a trend among young people. We can only hope that skepticism and rationality are also on the rise, with the dangerous situations growing out of control on the other side of the world. Atheism can lead to positive rational solutions for the betterment of humanity. Whichever label you call it, avoiding religion helps all around.

"I've always had sort of an ironic view of life. My belief system is that when this is over, it's over. That you don't look down from heaven and wait for your loved ones to join you. There may be some soul activity, but I'm not sure about that. But what I am sure about is that your molecules continue and in due time become something else. That's science." - William Shatner, March 9, 2006, in an Associated Press story.

In This Issue...

----Yes Virginia, there are Atheists in Alabama!
----Church Bells and Separation - Far North of the Bible Belt
----Texas Pig Racing! Just look for the mosque!
----The Blasphemy Challenge! Got a soul you’re not using?
From the ACA President, Matt Dillahunty,
Happy New Year!

Time can be an interesting and confusing subject. I remember listening, in confusion, as my Great Grandmother talked about something that happened in “ought six”. After my mother explained that she was simply abbreviating 1906, I was in awe. That may have been the first time I began to grasp the concept of time.

I remember, in High School, looking forward to being able to refer to the current year in those terms. Sure, being born in ’69 was neat - but being able to say “ought-six” was going to be so cool! Well, welcome to ought-seven! These days I’m far more impressed by the larger concepts than what label I choose to place on the year, but I must admit that it’s still a little ‘cool’ to say.

Despite our ability to reason and comprehend, we still tend to be bound by a very limited scope. There’s a small window of direct experience and our clarity falls off as the span of time increases. The same is true with regard to physical size. When we start talking about the vast expanse of space and the billions of years that have transpired since the formation of the universe - we’re usually only paying lip-service to the concepts. There are some great analogies and online videos that demonstrate the inherent bias of our perceptions.

Richard Dawkins used a simple analogy about time that I really enjoyed (though I’ve heard similar before and it’s probably not original to him): If you start at the center of your chest and use that as the starting point for the timeline of the universe and measure out to your outstretched arm, all of human history becomes a sliver of fingernail that could be taken off with one stroke of a nail file.

While many may mistakenly confuse that relatively brief time with “insignificance”, I’m proud to be a part of a group that prefers to make that fingernail shaving more significant and rewarding than any that came before it.

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of the ACA. I’m thrilled to be a part of the group and looking forward to celebrating this milestone. We owe a great debt to the founding members of this organization. From coffee shop to international media, we’ve come a long way.

We’ve got many plans for the coming year, some of which are already in motion. In addition to celebrating, I’ll be delivering a “State of the ACA” address at the February 11th, all-hands meeting. We’ve formed a building committee, and we’ll be actively pursuing a permanent home for the ACA over the coming year.

The TV show also achieved a significant goal. ACA Vice President, Don Baker (with help from the producers of the program and some technically knowledgeable ACA members) has managed to strengthen our presence on the net by uploading the video portion of the show. Now, in addition to the podcasts, people world-wide can visit Google video and watch full episodes of the program.

Elections for the board of directors will be held in May and I’d like to encourage all members to consider running for the board, participating in the election process and serving on the various committees. We’re only going to get busier and the participation of all of our members is greatly appreciated.

There are many more opportunities and needs and we’re doing what we can to recognize and act on all of them. We’re going to make “ought seven” an even better year than “ought six”...and you’re all invited to help us do exactly that!

-Matt Dillahunty

In Memoriam

The ACA was sad to discover the death of a prominent freethinker in Austin. Dr. Robert Solomon, UT Philosophy Dept., was one of our lecturers a few years ago, and he was also featured in the movie, Waking Life. He and his wife were traveling in Europe in early January when he became ill at an airport. Medical attention arrived quickly, but he died from pulmonary hypertension. (His wife also said that he had a congenital heart problem.) Dr. Solomon wrote a lot on existentialism, Nietzsche, love, emotions, etc. His lecture to ACA was shortly after the publication of his book “Spirituality for the Skeptic: The Thoughtful Love of Life.” We greatly appreciate and acknowledge Dr. Solomon’s contribution to the movement of freethought.

The Blasphemy Challenge!

The Rational Response Squad (http://rationalresponders.com) and Brian Flemming, creator of ‘The God Who Wasn’t There’ DVD, have started a new online campaign through YouTube.com called “The Blasphemy Challenge.” Deny the holy spirit in a video, upload it to YouTube, and get a free copy of ‘The God Who Wasn’t There’ on DVD. http://richarddawkins.net/article,425,The-Blasphemy-Challenge,The-Rational-Response-Squad Or visit: blasphemychallenge.com, richarddawkins.net, The Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason and Science www.richarddawkins.net Here at ACN, we predict that this idea will take off, and being on YouTube.com will really help spread the word about us. The internet has fueled our communication power a thousand times over.
January 1991 - He attacked a number of Protestant denominations when he declared: "You say you're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and
Thursday Feb 1  7:30 p.m.    Happy Hour at Ninfas Tex-Mex Restaurant in North Austin, West Anderson Lane/183 at I-35, on the Northwest corner of that intersection.

Sunday  Feb 4  11:30 a.m.  Regular meeting at Ventana Del Soul at 1834 East Oltorf, East of I-35 by about a mile.
12:15 - 1:45 pm  Monthly Lecture: Howard Miller - Austin History Center
4:30 - 6:00 pm  Atheist Experience TV Show, Time Warner Cable, Channel 10, 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Russell Glasser

Thursday Feb 8   7:30 p.m.    Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin
Saturday Feb 10  2:00 - 3:30 p.m.  Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show The live broadcast of the Non-Prophets. Past episodes can be heard via Podcast at: www.nonprofitsradio.com

Sunday  Feb 11  11:30 a.m.  Special 10th Birthday Meeting at Ventana Del Soul
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.  Board Meeting Immediately follows the regular meeting.
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV Show, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Jeff Dee

Thursday Feb 15   7:30 p.m.    Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin

Sunday Feb 18  11:30 a.m.  Regular meeting at Ventana Del Soul on East Oltorf
4:30 - 6:00 pm  Atheist Experience TV Show, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Tracie Harris

Thursday Feb 22   7:30 p.m.    Happy Hour at Ninfas in North Austin

Saturday Feb 24  2:00 - 3:30 p.m.  Non-Prophets Internet Radio Show
4:30 - 6:00 p.m.  Atheist Experience TV Show, Host: Matt Dillahunty, Co-host: Don Baker

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ACA Event Details

----Lecture Series  We hold our monthly lectures at the Austin History Center, at the corner of 9th St. and Guadalupe St. They start at 12:30pm in the “Reception Room.” Admission is always free, and it’s open to the public. Our February lecture will be given by Howard Miller. If you know of a good lecturer or if YOU have an interesting topic to talk about to the group, please e-mail us at: info@atheist-community.org or call and leave a message at our voicemail number: (512)371-2911 Past lecturers include several members of the ACA, like your editor. :o)

----Board Meetings  This month’s ACA Board meeting will be held at Ventana Del Soul on 2/11 right after the regular meeting. That usually means the board meeting starts around 1:30pm. All ACA members are welcome to attend, and we invite you also to speak up about issues of concern to you, but only board members may vote at board meetings. Current board issues include the 2007 ACA Budget, and the new Building Committee.

----Happy Hour! We meet for Happy Hour at Ninfa’s on E. Anderson/183, which is just west of I-35 by about a block. It’s on the Northbound side of 183. If you’re coming north on I-35, be sure to take the 183/St. Johns exit, go through St. Johns, and then left onto 183 Northbound, under the overpass. Ninfa’s is famous for their Tex Mex and Margaritas, aka Ninfaritas, but spending money there is not required.

----Regular Weekly Meetings  Sundays at 11:30am at Ventana Del Soul at 1834 East Oltorf, in the upstairs room.

----TV Show  The Atheist Experience is our TV show. It airs on Time-Warner Cable, public access channel 10, from 4:30pm - 6:00pm every Sunday.
It’s a live call-in talk show, and we invite ACA members, as well as the rest of the cable-viewing community to call in and talk Atheism with us. This is another form of outreach to the general public, so we enjoy getting challenges from religious callers. Guests are listed above in the calendar. The website for the show is www.atheist-experience.org The TV show now also has a blog: http://atheistexperience.blogspot.com

----Online Radio Show  The Non-Prophets is our online radio show. It airs live every other Saturday. please feel free to tune in live at http://nonprophets.gotdns.org and visit our archive to hear recent episodes.

----Public Demonstrations  Once in a while, we grab picket signs and cameras and hit the pavement in public on issues of importance to us. Usually these can’t be scheduled far in advance, so announcements about demonstrations will likely only be heard at regular membership meetings. Our one regularly scheduled annual picket is our protest of the National Day of Prayer ritual ceremonies which happen yearly at the State Capitol, in May.

----Outings  We like to go places as a group, and see some wonderful things, like a field trip. Recently, we took a cruise on Town Lake together. We like to have Winter Solstice parties, and maybe a bar-b-que for this year’s Summer Solstice. If you have an idea for an outing, please let us know. There are many wonderful things in Austin for a happy group like ours to go see. We are fun loving people!

The Atheist Community of Austin
PO Box 3798  Austin TX 78764  Voicemail: (512)371-2911  Website: www.atheist-community.org
As of February 10th 1997, our small group was recognized by the Secretary of the State of Texas as the Atheist Community of Austin Inc. We’re celebrating our groups birthday by having a special birthday meeting, with talks by some of the groups original founding members. Ten years! Woohoo! Party!

The Atheist Community of Austin is affiliated with four national freethought groups. This entitles our group and our individual members to certain benefits from each national group. Some benefits include reduced membership rates with those groups, reduced prices for products from those groups, and reduced national convention registration rates.
Some Upcoming Freethought Group Events and Individual Activism

From www.atheistalliance.org  Atheist Alliance

International Convention - Crystal City, Virginia, close to downtown Washington DC during the last weekend in September. Speakers include a caricature artist, Eddie Tabash, Pastor Deacon Fred, Richard Dawkins and Daniel Dennett. www.atheistalliance.org or: 1-866-HERETIC or for more information contact: Margaret Downey, Atheist Alliance International President, P. O. Box 242, Pocopson, Pennsylvania 19366, Phone: (610) 793-2737 • Fax: (610) 793-2569 • Email: downey1@downey1.cnc.net

From: www.atheists.org/convention  AACON XXXII The 33rd Annual National Convention of AMERICAN ATHEISTS
April 6-8, 2007, Seattle, Washington For more info: (908)276-7300
On Sunday, the convention will feature the world-class Spirit of Washington Train Trip complete with brunch and a stop at the famous Columbia Winery!

Some ACA members will be going to this convention and we’d like to hook up with as many as we can, and perhaps go together. The ACN editing team wants to take an Amtrak! :o) Please contact us if you’d like to take the train as well. Two trains in one week should be a mighty fine way to hang out with over 150 Atheists from all over.

The American Humanist Association’s next national conference will be June 7-10, 2007 in Portland, Oregon. We’ll get you more info about that when we get it. The American Humanist Association’s Washington DC office: (800)837-3792 or: americanhumanist.org

BEYOND BELIEF
2007 SUMMER SESSION
JULY 6 – JULY 22
AMHERST, NEW YORK
The Council for Secular Humanism: www.secularhumanism.org

The city flag of Washington DC

The president of the Atheist Alliance International, Margaret Downey

The city flag of Seattle, WA

The Renaissance Seattle Hotel

The city flag of Portland, OR

The city flag of Huntsville, which is in northern Alabama about eighteen miles south of the Tennessee state line nestled in the heart of the Tennessee Valley. Blair moved there about four years ago from Mobile on the Gulf Coast. The first thing that he noticed was the different reception he got as an atheist in both locations.

Blair was the President of The Mobile Atheists and the Mobile Area Freethought Association when he lived in Mobile and was an outspoken atheist there. he had many letters printed in the Mobile Register including three “Special to the Editors” that were given front-page status of the Opinion section of the paper. “I have always considered Mobile to be very backwoods for a larger city. I received threatening notes under my windshield wipers, my car was bashed in with a baseball bat, my bumper stickers were stolen, a cross was planted in my yard, Bibles were left on my front porch, and I almost got into a religious discrimination lawsuit over a Darwin coffee mug,” said Blair.

But all that changed when he moved to Huntsville, “Things are different here. Huntsville is a bastion of pluralism: a speck of blue in a sea of red. We have Redstone Arsenal, the NASA Marshal Space Flight Center, Space Camp, and many engineering and scientific-based employers in the valley.”

The environment of Huntsville creates a diverse group of residents, “The religious diversity here keeps Huntsville on an even keel. There are fundamentalists here, but their voices are drowned out by the pluralistic voice of tolerance. We have synagogues, mosques, Hindu and Buddhist temples, a church for every type of Christian denomination, Unitarian Universalists, a large pagan group, and of course a growing Freethought group.”

Blair is referring to the North Alabama Freethought Association (NAFA). Blair started NAFA after he arrived in Huntsville in order to meet fellow atheists, agnostics, and other freethinkers. The group started slowly but now has over seventy members. “Seventy is a really good number, especially for a city in Alabama,” commented Blair.

Blair is committed to atheism activism and wears several hats when it comes to his activist activities. Blair is the Alabama State Director for American Atheists, the Organizer of the North Alabama Freethought Association, the Director of Atheism Awareness, and the Creator of Alabama Atheist online. Blair is also currently working on a book that is expected to be published some time in the spring.

“It is important to me to end discrimination against atheists. The best way to do that is through example by our own actions and also through educating the public about atheism and atheists. We cannot ignore discrimination or violations of the Establishment Clause. I encourage people to speak out, write letters to their local newspaper, contact their government representatives, and stand up for equality,” he said.

Blair is also a Navy veteran. He served almost ten years in the Navy in the communications field where he served during Operation Desert Storm and Provide Promise. Blair was an atheist in a foxhole. This is appropriate because the Foxhole Atheists Memorial, ran by the Alabama Freethought Association (an affiliate of the Freedom from Religion Foundation), is at Lake Hopatia just outside Talladega. You can contact Blair Scott any of the following ways: Postal address: PO Box 41 Ryland, AL 35767-2000 Email: bscott@atheists.org Phone: (256) 513-5877 Go Blair!
I prefer the secular libertarian way this country was founded. I believe all people's beliefs and rights should be respected, not just the majority's.

Should we ignore the fact that the governments of Lisbon and Jewett City are walking all over the constitutions of the United States and Connecticut, or should we try to get the constitutions repealed so government can recognize and in fact promote the religion of the majority? The Constitution of the United States specifically forbids the government promotion of any religion, as does the Connecticut Constitution. The Connecticut Constitution specifically reads:

- Article First: SEC. 3. The exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, shall forever be free to all persons in the state; provided, that the right hereby declared and established, shall not be so construed as to excuse acts of licentiousness, or to justify practices inconsistent with the peace and safety of the state.

- Article Seventh: It being the right of all men to worship the Supreme Being, the Great Creator and Preserver of the Universe, and to render that worship in a mode consistent with the dictates of their consciences, no person shall by law be compelled to join or support, nor be classed or associated with, any congregation, church or religious association. No preference shall be given by law to any religious society or denomination in the state. Each shall have and enjoy the same and equal powers, rights and privileges, and may support and maintain the ministers or teachers of its society or denomination, and may build and repair houses for public worship.

Should we convince our state senators and representatives to repeal both sections of the Connecticut Constitution and replace it with something like this: “Towns in Connecticut are free to promote any religious views espoused by the majority of the town.”

If this is done, then the towns of the state could then promote religion any way they wanted that is as long as their actions didn't conflict with the Constitution of the United States which states in Amendment 1 that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.

You see, the problem we have in Jewett City is not about the music now, but now it is a constitutional problem of both the state constitution and the U.S. Constitution.

If Jewett City wants to repeal the Article First, Section 3 of the state constitution and the first amendment of the United States Constitution, then and only then can the sound system stay in the Jewett City Baptist Church, and then the town of Jewett City can promote the Baptist religion as if it is the only religious sect in this country and, who knows, then maybe we can become a theocracy, and maybe then we can start to have religious wars like the rest of the world instead of living in peace like we have for over 200 years.

Maybe the fine folks who want us to enjoy their particular brand of music then could guard their sacred sound system that is playing their particular brand of music with the guns that we can then have differences of opinion settled the old-fashioned way, by killing the people that don't believe in the same invisible man we do.

Of course I am being facetious, but this is what we are facing if we let a sound system that was originally purchased with federal grant monies to specifically be a warning system for all taxpayers, be a system that promotes religion.

For those of you that want to do the above, maybe then we can have towns that cater to specific religions, maybe we can have a town for the Jews, pagans, Wiccans, Methodists, Catholics, Lutherans, Moslems, Buddhists and any other religious sect you can think of instead of all of us living together and being brotherly towards each other.

You see, I prefer the secular libertarian way this country was founded, and I believe all people's beliefs and rights should be respected, not just the majority's. This country was founded as a Republic, not a Democracy, and if you want the ruling of the majority to roll over the rights of the minority, then we need to repeal the First Amendment of the United States Constitution as well as modify the Connecticut Constitution. I don't know if Jewett City has that much clout, but those of you who want the sound system to remain in the church, do you want to petition your representatives to do that?

Again, this is not about the music anymore. It is about the rights of all to be respected, and to not have the taxes of the minority stolen for the whims of the majority. Since the system was bought with the monies of the nation, this means the whole nation is supporting the Jewett City Baptist church.

Bill Russell lives in Norwich, Connecticut. For more information about this ongoing situation, check out American Atheists Connecticut at: www.atheists.org/ct

Hajj 2007 - No Reported Deaths

Sometimes we Atheist activists are accused of focusing only on the problems of Christianity, to the exclusion of any talk about other religions. Of course we know that we occasionally criticize other religions, just not as much as Christianity. The reason should be obvious: Christians lead the pack in America. Whenever someone from another religion causes problems in America, we talk it up, but again, fundamentalist Christians are on the cutting edge of religious harm here in America.

So as another example of how all major religions have considerable recurring problems, here is an article about the Muslims’ biggest ritual, the Hajj. First, some basic information about the event, from www.fcusd.k12.ca.us:

“The annual pilgrimage to Makkah- the Hajj- is an obligation only for those who are physically and financially able to perform it. Nevertheless, about two million people go to Makkah [aka Mecca] each year from every corner of the globe providing a unique opportunity for those of different nations to meet one another.

Although Makkah is always filled with visitors, the annual Hajj begins in the twelfth month of the Islamic year (which is lunar, not solar), so the Hajj and Ramadan fall sometimes in summer, sometimes in winter). Pilgrims wear special clothes: simple garments which strip away distinctions of class and culture, so that all stand equal before God.

The rites of the Hajj, which are of Abrahamic origin, include circling the Ka’ba [that big black box] seven times, and going seven times between the mountains of Safa and Marwa as did Hagar during her search for water. Then the pilgrims stand together on the wide plain of Arafa and join in prayers for God’s forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgment.”

The problem with the Hajj is that many many people have needlessly died at that event, over many many years. Overcrowding and the lack of crowd control has been the chief cause although there have also been freak accidents, attacks, and at least one riot. Since the death toll at so many Hajjs, many people have called for the Saudi Arabian government to institute effective safety and security measures. Over the last ten Hajjs or so, the Saudi government has done some work, and spent a lot of money to make the Hajj safer, yet the deaths still stack up. This year’s Hajj began in the last week of December, and ended in early January, with no reported injuries or deaths. We’re relieved. Yes, we care.
Another Catholic Church Payoff for Sex Abuse

According to the Associated Press, the Spokane, Washington Catholic Diocese will pay at least $48 million to victims of sex abuse perpetrated by priests in their employ. This is part of a deal to have that diocese come out of bankruptcy. The deal still has to be approved by victims and another bankruptcy judge.

This settlement deal requires the Spokane Bishop to publicly support eliminating statues of limitations on child sex crimes and to visit each parish where children were abused to urge parishioners to report sex abuse. He must also send letters of apology to victims and publish the names of all known abusers, allow the victims to publicly address the parishes where they were abused and to publish their stories in the diocesan newspaper. All in all, a painful series of punishments for the once world-dominating Catholic Church.

Around 150 sex abuse claims were made against the Spokane Diocese, but not all claimants sued. This brings the number of victims of Catholic clergy sex abuse around the world to a number much too high to accurately count. Here are just a few other settlements of late:

---The Archdiocese of Portland, OR, filed a bankruptcy reorganization plan that would pay about $75 million to settle nearly 170 claims of priestly sex abuse.

---The Archdiocese of Los Angeles, CA agreed to pay $60 million to settle 45 sex abuse claims.

---The Diocese of Orange County, CA paid out $100 million to 87 claimants in 2005.

---The Archdiocese of Boston, MA paid $85 million to 552 claimants in 2003.

In the immortal words of Aerosmith, “Chip away, chip away at the stone.”

Study Shows Embezzlement Plagues American Catholic Churches

A recent study conducted by researchers at Villanova University reveals that 85 percent of American Catholic dioceses have reported problems with embezzlement. Of the dioceses which responded to the question of how much money has been lost, 11 percent of those said that they had lost in excess of $500,000. The survey covered embezzlement only in the last five years.

This is another big problem for the Catholic Church at large, after dozens of class action lawsuits against that church for child sex abuse have resulted in huge payouts to victims. The Villanova study’s authors recommend that dioceses create fraud policies, conduct annual audits of parishes and create a uniform budgeting process using standardized software.

The more the Catholic church spends on its mistakes, and the more it loses to embezzlement, along with other vacuums of finances they have to deal with, it’s amazing to think that they can sustain this for now. They’re that rich.

We’re still expecting a rise in problems and incidents regarding Catholic priests trying to exorcise people. A renewed promotion of exorcisms coming from the Vatican implies a promising future for law enforcement officials, and psychiatrists and con-men, all around the world. It’s no wonder we still see that church fighting hard against the civil rights of gays and lesbians to get married, and interfering in American politics in the first place, to get their anti-choice agenda into our laws. Well the list just goes on and on...
Atheist Community News

The Newsletter of the Atheist Community of Austin

PO Box 3798, Austin TX  78764

The Atheist Community of Austin is a non-profit educational and social organization, founded in 1996 to help Atheists meet other Atheists in the Austin area, and to help the public understand us better. We advocate a rational and necessary separation between government and religion, and a free and open level of religious liberty - to include a real existence of freedom FROM religion. Non-religious Americans make up about 14% of the population, and that's a large enough minority group in America, that it deserves to be heard. So now you hold in your hand an example of the Atheist side of things. You can thank the very valuable cultural and philosophical diversity that exists in our beautiful city, Austin, Texas.

"Hey we can't really be dumb if we're only following God's orders. Let's get serious. God knows what he's doing, and he wrote this book here, and the book says that he made us all to be just like him. So if we're dumb--then God is dumb, and maybe even a little ugly on the side."

The late Frank Zappa, Godless American