



Written by [James Heiser](#) on March 29, 2011

## Secularism Spreads in Spanish Schools

A March 25 article from ANSAmед reports that “Secularism in Spain is quickly gaining steam,” and that the Archbishop of Madrid is warning of “the persecution of Catholics in Spain.” Although Spain is often viewed as historically serving as one of the bulwarks of Roman Catholicism, recent events offer evidence that anti-clerical sentiment is once again on the rise in that nation.



When Pope Benedict XVI visited Spain last November, he warned of a trend toward “aggressive” secularism which he believed was reminiscent of the mood which led to a vicious persecution of the Roman Catholic Church during the 1930s. As [USA Today reported on November 8](#):

Benedict told reporters en route to Santiago that the anticlericalism seen now in Spain is like that of the 1930s, when the church suffered a wave of violence and persecution as the country lurched from an unstable democracy to civil war.

The reference was striking, given the scale of violence back then, when poverty-stricken and disgruntled Spaniards burned churches and murdered priests and nuns whom they considered obstacles to much-needed change. The church claims 4,184 clergy were killed by the government, or Republican side, which accused the church of backing fascist Gen. Francisco Franco. Nowadays, the church finds itself fighting laws supported by Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero’s Socialist government that have allowed gay marriage, fast-track divorce and easier abortions.

According to the recent ANSAmед story, Spain’s secularist trend can be seen in social indicators such as declining rate marriages taking place within the church: In 2010, only 34.1 percent of marriages took place in the context of a religious service. But the primary focus of the story is the precipitous decline in religious education:

On the other hand, in the last 5 years the number of students registered for optional religion classes has dropped by 350,000, declining to 3.17 million students from 3.54 million just five years ago. Attendance at religion classes dropped from 77.4% in the 2005-2006 scholastic year to just 71% this year, equivalent to a 8.3% decline according to the latest statistics.

Furthermore, there is an effort underway to eliminate the visible presence of the Christian religion from university campuses, with a “manifesto”—“signed by over 453 university professors from across Spain”—protesting the presence of chapels and churches on school campuses. In addition to the “manifesto,” protesters in Madrid demanded the removal of “religious symbols” (read: crucifixes and other images associated with the Christian faith) from the universities. But some students were not content with mere words; instead, three male students and one female student decided to shed their shirts in the chapel at Complutense University — a course of action which Cardinal Ruoco Maria Varela



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later deemed “an attack on the freedom of worship and desecrating a holy place,” and which at the least would seem worthy of being described as “puerile.”

The rejection of religious education, and protests aimed at driving even the symbols of the Christian faith from the grounds of Spain’s university campuses is, of course, in marked contrast to the way in which Islam is treated. As Janet Levy wrote in an American Thinker article, “[Conditioning for Dhimmitude](#)”:

In December of 2010, Spanish National Police were asked to investigate a geography teacher in Spain who discussed the climate in a region of the country favorable for serrano ham production. A Muslim family of a student in the class contacted the police and the national court to complain that it was against their son’s religion to hear about ham. They claimed their son had been suffering greatly since the incident, unable to sleep or attend school as a consequence. It is unfathomable that a Jew, Christian or a practitioner of any other religion would act in this way and demand special consideration. Even a kosher observant Jewish child would be expected to adapt to the surrounding non-Jewish world. In all likelihood, any concerns would be dismissed, perhaps ridiculed, and the parents would be told to toe the line or find another school. The fact that the complaint was lodged in the first place and then taken seriously speaks volumes.

Despite the absurdity of such a claim of ‘oppression’ of a Muslim’s faith, the accusation and resulting investigation was not greeted with a pig roast outside the nearest mosque. Ritual desecration of houses of worship is only perpetrated against the chapels and churches of the Christian faith.

The history of Spain was shaped by Islamic invasion and [Moorish oppression](#) of the Christian majority until the [Reconquista](#) was finally victorious. It hardly seems coincidental that two defining events of the modern age — Columbus’s discovery (from a European perspective) of the New World and the defeat of the last Islamic stronghold in Spain — occurred in the same fateful year of A.D. 1492. An utterly secularized Spain would be a nation ignorant of its past and thus quite possibly doomed to repeat it.

*Photo: “Execution” of the [Sacred Heart of Jesus](#) by Communist militiamen at [Cerro de los Ángeles](#) near Madrid, on 7 August 1936, was an example of the war against Christianity by the Communists during the Spanish Civil War.*



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