

# Faith Digest

April 21, 2010

**British army “targeting” mosques?** Muslims in England are demanding the British army apologize for using apparent replicas of mosques for target practice on a firing range. The Bradford Council for Mosques, whose area is populated heavily by Muslims, claims the Ministry of Defense has set up seven phony mosques, complete with green-domed roofs, to shoot at on its firing ground in North Yorkshire. The Muslim group wants the army to dismantle the offensive targets and apologize for using them. In a statement, the Ministry of Defense did not apologize but insisted that it had “no intention” of causing offense and that the targets were part of “providing the best training facilities” for British armed forces now operating in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**Graffiti sprayed on pope’s birthplace.** Vandals in southern Germany spray-painted obscene graffiti on the birthplace of [Pope Benedict XVI](#). The graffiti, painted in foot-high blue letters, was found over the door to the house in the Bavarian village of Marktl am Inn where Joseph Ratzinger was born in 1927. Police would not release the content of the three-word phrase, which was removed the same day, but a spokesman described it to the Associated Press as a “defaming remark from the realm of the obscene” which was not specifically aimed at the pope. A police spokesman told Agence France-Presse that “one can say (the graffiti) is connected” to the spreading international scandal over the sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. That scandal has focused in recent weeks on charges that Benedict, when still a cardinal, mishandled cases of pedophile priests in Germany and the United States.

**Pope plummets in polls.** As sex abuse scandals continue to roil the Roman Catholic Church, Pope Benedict XVI’s approval ratings have plummeted, according to a new study, with 44 percent of Americans saying

he has done a “poor” job handling the issue. Just 12 percent of Americans say the pope has done an “excellent” (3 percent) or “fair” (9 percent) job with the scandal, a significant drop from April 2008, when the pope visited the United States. At that time, 39 percent said he had done an excellent or good job addressing clergy sex abuse. The poll, conducted by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, was based on a national telephone survey April 1-5. The maximum margin of sampling error for the survey is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

**Want services in Quebec? Unveil.** The Canadian province of Quebec has introduced unprecedented legislation that effectively would bar Muslim women from receiving or delivering public services while wearing a niqab, or face-covering veil. According to the draft law, Muslim women’s faces would have to be visible in all publicly funded locations, including government offices, schools, hospitals and daycare centers. Fully veiled women in the niqab or burqa, for example, would not be able to consult a doctor in a hospital or attend classes at public schools or a university. The province will hold public hearings on the draft legislation, but it is widely expected to pass.