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## Bold predictions for the religious world in 2012

by Bill Tammeus

A small c catholic

One reason I've cherished my long and extinguished career as a columnist is that, as you well know, columnists have the gift of prophecy.

In fact, we have a double gift of it. First, we speak resolutely with our prophetic voice, calling on the world's many wayward people to do the right thing, which always means urging them to do what we columnists want them to do. Or at least what we think will amuse us if they really do it.

But second, we have the ability to see into the future. And as the late Kansas City Royals reliever Dan Quisenberry (who also had the gift of prophecy even though he was not a columnist but merely a poet) once said, "I have seen the future. It's very much like the present, only longer."

Dan got that right, except for the parts he didn't.

In Dan's quirky spirit, then, let's look at what my own gift of prophecy tells me about what is coming in 2012 in the field of religion. If, by the end of the new year, you don't recall seeing any of what I predict coming true, you may be sure that it's only because you missed it.

- As a promotional tool, the United Methodist Church will ask Garrison Keillor to quit making fun of Lutherans and start making fun of Methodists.
- In city after city, new franchise liquor stores will spring up not far from Catholic churches, and each store will be named "And With Your Spirits." Church members who can ask for merlot in Latin will get an automatic 10 percent discount.

- To investigate what all of its previously appointed committees have been doing in recent years, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) will appoint a committee.
- John L. Allen Jr. of the *National Catholic Reporter* will win a Pulitzer Prize for his insightful coverage and analysis of the Occupy Rome movement led by American Catholics.
- The slow economy will cause Santa Claus to offer buyouts to Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and Vixen, fire Comet, Cupid, Donner, Blitzen and Rudolf and then hire four of them back as contract employees with no benefits. And you don't want to know about the elves and their adoption of a monastic lifestyle.
- To placate parishioners with sensitive noses, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will tell churches that when they use incense in worship services they should adopt a Don't Ask/Don't Smell policy.

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- Thousands of pilgrims will flock to McBee, S.C., when a woman announces her discovery of two miraculous images on a taco shell -- Jesus and Newt Gingrich.
- Pat Robertson will declare that the Republican presidential selection caucuses in Iowa are a punishment from God, and for the first time on any issue, mainline Protestants all over the country will agree with him.
- British Bishop N.T. Wright, showing signs of slowing down, will publish only 46 new books in 2012.
- Barack Obama, tired of being called a Muslim, will become ordained online by the Universal Life Church and insist on being called the reverend in chief.
- Islamophobes, having driven the Lowe's company to withdraw its advertising on a TV reality show about Muslims, will try, but fail, to go global by getting the International Olympic Committee to approve a new winter sport -- Quran burning.
- Finally abandoning their persistent efforts to get Christians to stop calling Hanukkah the Jewish Christmas, Jews across America will set up kettles next to the Salvation Army's kettles and collect money for The Fund to Stamp Out Religious Obtuseness.
- By the end of the year, there will be a 2 percentage point rise in the number Americans who think that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife.

By the way, if, by the end of 2012, Michele Bachmann is president-elect, all bets are off.

[Bill Tammeus, a Presbyterian elder and former award-winning Faith columnist for *The Kansas City Star*, writes the daily "Faith Matters" blog for *The Star's* website and a monthly column for *The Presbyterian Outlook*. His latest book, co-authored with Rabbi Jacques Cukierkorn, is *They Were Just People: Stories of Rescue in Poland During the Holocaust*. Email him at wtammeus@kc.rr.com.]

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