

Briefly noted

News in the [October 7, 2008](#) issue

A New York judge has dismissed the first challenge to a new state policy that recognizes same-sex marriages performed out of state, saying the current policy is in line with state law. In a ruling September 2, state Supreme Court judge Lucy Billings called the directive “consistent with New York’s common law, statutory law, and constitutional separation of powers regarding recognition of marriages legally solemnized outside New York.” The Alliance Defensive Fund, a conservative Christian legal organization, brought the suit in June shortly after Governor David Paterson ordered that same-sex couples who are married out of state be given the same rights afforded to heterosexual couples.

The Church of Scientology and seven of its members will be tried for fraud and other allegations in a groundbreaking case that could lead to a ban on the church’s operations in France, legal sources cited by local media say. The allegations, which go back a decade, were originally leveled by a woman who claims she paid Scientology more than \$28,000 for lessons, books, drugs and an “electrometer,” which church members claim can be used to measure a person’s mental state. The coming trial in Paris will be the first time the church is judged on charges of swindling.

The Vatican has disciplined one of the promoters of a world-famous Bosnian shrine to the Virgin Mary while it investigates him on charges of heresy and sexual misdeeds. Tomislav Vlasic, a Franciscan priest, has been confined to an Italian monastery and forbidden to make public appearances or hear confessions during the investigation, according to documents on the Web site of the Catholic diocese that oversees the shrine at Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One document refers to accusations of “heresy and schism, as well as scandalous acts.” Medjugorje has supposedly been the site of more than 40,000 apparitions of the Virgin Mary since 1981 and draws millions of pilgrims to the Herzegovinan town. The Catholic Church has never endorsed the visions.