

Briefly noted

News in the [January 25, 2005](#) issue

Dr. Michael Newdow, the California atheist who sued to get “under God” removed from the Pledge of Allegiance, says he refiled a suit regarding the pledge in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California January 3. A court staffer said legal documents had been received but had not been officially recorded pending additional paperwork from Newdow. In the new case, Newdow has been joined in the suit by three families who include atheists and claim they are offended “to have their government and its agents advocating for a religious view they each specifically decry.” The U.S. Supreme Court determined last June that Newdow did not have standing to bring the legal challenge. Defendants in the new case include the Congress, California, the United States and some school districts. Two weeks before refiling the pledge suit, Newdow filed suit in a Washington district court to try to halt designated clergy from uttering prayers at President George Bush’s January 20 inauguration.

Pope John Paul II is reported to be considering a proposal to abolish miracles as requirements for sainthood. Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, archbishop of Genoa, told the Genoa newspaper *Secolo XIX* recently that there is a growing feeling that the key requirement for sainthood is a life of “heroic virtue” and that miracles are “anachronistic.” The proposal was sent to the pope by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Until two years ago the cardinal held the No. 2 post of secretary in that doctrinal department. An official of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints refused to discuss the report but indicated that discarding the miracle requirement would be little short of revolutionary. John Paul streamlined it in 1983 by cutting the number of miracles required from four to only one for martyrs and two for other candidates. A miracle often is the cure of a terminally ill patient, who had prayed to the candidate to intercede for him or her. A panel of medical experts must certify that the cure was “sudden, complete and permanent” and has no medical explanation.