

ARTIST ALTERS OFFENSIVE DEPICTION OF CHRIST

This is a story all Catholic League members should savor. It involves a member who contacted William Donohue about some offensive artwork and how successful we were in getting the artist to alter her work. There's more: we handled this issue without going to the media but it wound up on page one of a major newspaper nonetheless. Here's what happened.

A carpenter who works at JFK international airport called Donohue saying that a mural featuring a totally naked Jesus Christ on the cross was part of a display about to open May 24 at Terminal 4, a new airport facility. League director of communications Patrick Scully immediately contacted Peter Boone, the public relations manager for the new terminal.

Boone verified the report: the artwork showed Christ with a penis and was part of a display including 20 murals. Mr. Boone was told that we are taking this very seriously and wanted to know what measures would be taken. On April 19, he said he was going to talk to the project's art consultant and that we would be very satisfied with the result.

On April 21, the worker who initially contacted Donohue did so again: he said that a loincloth had been draped around Christ's midsection, thus ending the controversy.

On April 22, Donohue mentioned this incident at a talk he gave at the opening of a new Catholic Studies Center at Nassau Community College in Garden City, New York. Paul Moses of *Newsday* reported on this event and confronted Donohue after his talk about the JFK incident. Donohue followed up on the story and accurately reported what happened in the Long Island daily.

Donohue then issued the following remarks about this case:

"If only the officials at the Brooklyn Museum of Art were half as responsible as the officials at JFK, then we'd have nothing to complain about. Kudos, too, to Deborah Masters, the artist who agreed to slightly alter her work so as not to needlessly offend a large segment of the public. This is the way these issues should be resolved. Whether they will or not depends not on those offended, but on those responsible for the offense." He got a chance to discuss this issue on the Fox News Channel show, "Hannity and Colmes."

Newsday reported that airport officials did not want to get into a confrontation with the Catholic League. This is something that all our members can justly take pride in—it shows how far we've come and the clout we carry.