

BIGOTED GEORGIA TEACHER ESCAPES UNSCATHED

On Ash Wednesday, February 21, a Catholic female student at White County High School in Cleveland, Georgia had her ashes wiped off her forehead by a substitute teacher in her Honors Trigonometry class. When the girl's classmates protested, the teacher laced into the girl making patently untrue and derisive statements about Catholicism.

On March 5, Catholic League president Bill Donohue wrote to Paul Shaw, superintendent of the White County Board of Education, wanting to know what disciplinary measures would be taken against the teacher. In his letter of March 21, Shaw said, "I am aware of the incident and believe the principal resolved the matter in an appropriate manner. He has met with [the girl] and her father to hear concerns. The employee made an honest error in judgment and has been appropriately counseled and cautioned and I believe a similar incident will not be repeated."

Bill Donohue issued the following remarks today:

"I am now contacting Kathy Cox, Georgia's State Superintendent of Schools, asking her to investigate this matter. Under Georgia's Code of Ethics for Educators (505-6-.01), it has a section on 'Abuse of Students' in Part (3b). The fourth example under 'Standards' says that unethical conduct includes 'engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, sex, national origin, religion or disability.' Case closed.

"The offending teacher has since been dismissed from White County High School, but for reasons wholly unrelated to this incident. No matter, the real issue here is not the teacher, rather it is Dr. Shaw. For him to say that a teacher in his employ made 'an honest error in judgment' by wiping ashes off

the forehead of a Catholic student on Ash Wednesday—and then berated her in front of her classmates—is beyond lame. It’s morally reprehensible.”

ADDENDUM, 3-29-07: Dana Tofig, director of communications for the Georgia Department of Education, phoned the Catholic League today. Tofig reported that under state law, Superintendent Kathy Cox does not have the power to launch an investigation into the actions of a county superintendent. Tofig added that the correct department is the [Georgia Professional Standards Commission](#).