

Business / Workplace



San Francisco, CA—Divine Interventions sells sex toys with a religious theme. On its website it offers sex toys that are in the shape of a crucifix, the Blessed Mother, baby Jesus, a nun, Judas, Moses and the Devil, as well as Buddha and the Grim Reaper. Product descriptions include: “Hail Mary! Virgin Mary, like most smart women, knows there is a Second Coming. And a Third. And a Fourth. (Where’s my counting beads?) So give the Lucky Virgin what she wants. And with the Holy Lube, you betcha these ain’t gonna be immaculate. This mother is...superior”; Baby Jesus: “Slap him on the dashboard. Use him as the ultimate pacifier or make Baby Jesus the centerpiece of your magnificent Dildo Crèche. What would Jesus do?”; Jackhammer Jesus [in the shape of a crucifix]: “Jesus was a carpenter. Now he’s the powertool. He’s the baddest and the best in all of Nazareth”; Diving Nun: “Slap this suction lady of Lordy-Lourdes on your convent wall! She sticks! She sucks! The Diving Nun will take you with her into the Grotto of Never Ending Delight!”

Rochester, NY—Among greeting cards offered by Shade Tree Greetings was one that depicted a photograph of two girls in Communion dresses with the inscription, “We were good little Catholic girls.” On the inside it reads, “The emphasis is on WERE.”

January

New York, NY—HSBC USA apologized for altering the religious imagery of a fifth-grader’s holiday card submission. Gregory Paladino, a student at Our Mother of Sorrows outside of Rochester, New York, had won \$1,000 for his school when his card was declared the winner of the HSBC holiday card contest. But the card the student submitted—showing a dove hovering over a village—was declared objectionable by the bank judges because it also showed a church with a steeple and a cross.

Instead of rejecting the card because it violated the HSBC policy of prohibiting religious imagery, HSBC decided to print the winning card after they had removed the steeple and cross; by excising the church, it was intentionally made to look like other houses in the scene. An apology for altering the card was granted by Youssef A. Nasr, chief executive of HSBC. He added that the card should never have been chosen as the winner since it violated the bank's policy regarding religious imagery.

March

Washington, DC—"Between Friends," a club that hosts after-hours dance parties for homosexuals, advertised for a party called "Sunday Mass." The advertisement showed a picture of Christ with the inscription, "Get on your knees, say your prayers, and beg because, boi...God has spoken."

September

Michigan—Enlightenedspartan.com sold t-shirts for a football game between Notre Dame and Michigan State University. T-shirts for the Michigan State Spartans featured the slogan "Whip The Goddamn Catholics."

October

Rock Island, IL—Bruce Millage and Jeffrey Guthrie turned a former synagogue into a sports bar by the name "Hail Mary's Last Chance." Local Catholics objected, including Bishop Daniel Jenky of Peoria. The Catholic League wrote to the owners to ask them to reconsider the name. A few days later Bruce Millage called to say there was never any intent to offend Catholics, and that they would drop the name "Hail Mary" from the bar.

December

American Greetings offered many tasteless Christmas e-cards on its website. For example, there was one in which elves working with Santa's laundry hold up his underwear and exclaim, "Man! You think that a guy who can deliver toys all over the world

in one night could at least learn to wipe himself a bit better!" There was also a "Risqué" set of cards, one of which showed a woman stripping suggestively and displaying S&M gear; at one point she's dressed like an angel, saying, "Ever make an angel in the snow?" At the end, the animation says, "Now that I've got your attention, Merry Christmas!" There was also a category of "Rude" cards, such as the one that listed all the annoying parts of the holiday season, with the comment, "It's Christmas. Hope yours doesn't suck." There was a total absence of tasteless Hanukkah and Kwanzaa cards. Similarly on Yahoo! Greetings, of the 33 Hanukkah cards in 2003, 26 displayed a Star of David or menorah. Of the 443 Christmas cards, 9 were religious.

December

Salt Lake City, UT—Fraser Nelson, executive director of the Disability Law Center, advised clients not to have Christmas decorations in their workplaces. Nelson, self-identified as Jewish, was against any religious holiday in the workplace. She said she was "personally offended" when she saw a Christmas tree in the rotunda of the Utah State Capitol.

December

Susan Dunn, an emotional intelligence coach, warned against linking December with Christmas, counseling not to forget about Bodhi Day (a Buddhist holiday, a.k.a. Rohatsu). In order to have a true multicultural holiday party, Dunn advised that employees should be encouraged to bring various ethnic foods. "But remember," she observed, "it's counterproductive to ask the Hungarian to bring goulash, etc."

December

Minneapolis, MN—ProGroup advises about diversity in the workplace. Myrna Marofsky, the president, referred to the Christmas season as the "December Dilemma" (the term used by the Anti-Defamation League). She wrote, "Consider scheduling celebrations or sending cards before or after the holiday season." She added that "Santa Claus can be surprisingly

divisive,” and suggested that employers “invite a magician instead.” She recommended singing “Frosty the Snowman.” She concluded, “There’s [sic] a lot of nice Christmas songs that don’t have anything to do with Baby Jesus.”