

CATHOLIC-BASHING PLAY OPENS ON GOOD FRIDAY

"The Children of Fatima" will open on Good Friday at Rider University in New Jersey. Written by Rider faculty member Michael Friel, the plot revolves around a Catholic schoolboy in the 1960s who fears that the world will end when the pope reveals the third secret of Fatima.

According to the *Princeton Packet*, a local newspaper, Friel admits that a friend of his called the play "Catholic bashing." To which Friel replied, "I'm really going for the way that all institutions, whether it's religion or government or even your parent, use fear to get what they want. By instilling fear in you, they can control you." The play features a drunken Irish priest and a "hard-assed Sr. Regina Coeli."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"If this play has a universal message about the way institutions of any kind use fear to control people, then why, out of all the institutions in society, did Friel choose the Catholic Church to slam? Why did his friend label the play Catholic bashing as opposed to, say, institution bashing? Why is the play opening on Good Friday?

"I have faxed a letter to Rider University president Bart Luedeke asking him to do for Catholics what he recently did for Jews. On December 3, 2002, President Luedeke released a statement to the Rider community distancing the university from an upcoming appearance on campus of the anti-Semitic poet Amiri Baraka. Luedeke said Baraka's visit to the campus 'does not reflect a University endorsement of the beliefs and assertions attributed to him.' He went on to say that

Baraka's statements 'have offended many members of our community and at face value stand in stark contrast to the sense of human value so important at Rider.'

"That was a commendable statement. In the same vein, I am asking President Luedeke to reassure Catholic students that the university does not endorse this play. Beyond this, is there anyone who believes that any college would open an anti-Semitic play on Yom Kippur or an anti-black play on Martin Luther King Day?"