

# CATHOLIC COLLEGE AVOIDS LEAGUE ACTION

An art exhibit at a west coast Catholic college almost triggered a strong response from the Catholic League. But we are happy to report that our intervention led to a satisfactory conclusion. Because the incident was handled responsibly by the president of the college, we have no interest in disclosing the name of the school. However, readers should know what happened.

The league learned that an art exhibit showed a rendition of the Virgin Mary as a large tattooed Barbie doll giving birth to an Elvis doll. The art, which covered almost an entire wall, had a kneeler in front of it that activated the songs, "Like a Virgin" and "Material Girl." The artist claimed that his work was a parody of the pop star Madonna. It was on display in March and April.

A press story quoted the president as saying that the display is "not what I'd call good or devotional art, but I don't know that we would tear it of the walls." At that, William Donohue called the school and asked for verification. Nothing he said was disputed, however the person to whom he spoke expressed grave concern for what the league might do. Donohue told this person she had 20 minutes to have the president call him before he went to the press.

Shortly thereafter, a school official called Donohue asking what he wanted. Donohue said that if he didn't hear from the president in 15 minutes, he was going to the press denouncing the school's irresponsibility. He pledged to contact hundreds of media outlets advertising the school's position. Worried, the woman quickly got the message to the president and he called Donohue immediately.

The president stated that the display was not a rendition of the Virgin Mary. He said it was the artist's way of showing how materialistic the pop singer was in comparison to Our Blessed Lady. Donohue then asked if it was "empirically obvious" to everyone that the Barbie doll was not Mary. The president was somewhat less than convincing at this point, and that is why Donohue insisted that a sign be placed alongside the display indicating that this was not a representation of the Virgin Mary. The president agreed to this demand.

In the course of the discussion, Donohue told the president that when there is a conflict between respect for academic freedom and respect for the heritage of Catholicism, the value that should be paramount in the mind of Catholic college officials should clearly be the latter. After all, Catholic colleges are not obliged to play host to Catholic-bashing.

The league is pleased with the outcome. But it finds it exasperating to have to instruct Catholic college officials on how to do their job.