

CATHOLIC LEAGUE STATEMENT ON “CORPUS CHRISTI”

Rev. Philip Eichner

Chairman, Board of Directors, Catholic League

July 20, 2001

The Catholic League seeks to defend the rights of individual Catholics in what pertains to their faith, and to defend the Church against persecution, slander and defamation. The means that the league uses are all sorts of moral persuasion: dialogue, media protest, social and economic boycott. As a general rule the league does not seek to accomplish its aims through direct litigation, however justified and wise that procedure may be in certain cases.

The Catholic League is also aware that first amendment rights regarding expressions of and about religion enjoy particular breadth. To express hostility to religion is a constitutionally protected right. To try to stop the expression of this hostility by appeals to constitutional law through litigation is called censorship.

In the issue of Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne and the production of the play “Corpus Christi” on its campus, the Catholic League approached school authorities as to the violation (not of law) of Catholic sensibilities. The school administration responded positively to the league’s concerns about the play. By distributing a statement registering our moral objections to the play to every theatergoer, we have accomplished our goal of using this event as a teaching moment.

The Catholic League, as explained above, did not pursue litigation under the first amendment because it is not our

policy to do so, and secondly, because this play does not entail first amendment violations. We are aware that some who object to the play have chosen a legal remedy and we respect their right to do so. We share their hurt over this matter and admire their determination to protest the play.

In brief, the Catholic League's approach to this latest manifestation of anti-Catholic bias was most clearly expressed in the editorial of the diocesan weekly of July 15. *Today's Catholic* is highly critical of the play while also noting that "The First Amendment protects the right to write and perform such a play as 'Corpus Christi.' That is the foundation of American democracy that should never be infringed."