

# **“CHOCOLATE JESUS” NIXED; PUBLIC RALLIES TO OUR SIDE**

From April 1 to April 7, the Roger Smith Lab Gallery at the Roger Smith Hotel in New York City was set to display a 6-foot tall anatomically correct sculpture of Jesus in milk chocolate; the figure was depicted as crucified. But thanks to a protest led by the Catholic League, it never saw the light of day.

Artist Cosimo Cavallaro titled his work “My Sweet Lord”; a picture was available on the Internet. The Roger Smith Hotel is located in the heart of New York City, and the gallery is located on street level, easily accessible to the public. Adding insult to injury, the public was invited to eat the Jesus-figure. All of this was to happen during Holy Week.

“All those involved are lucky that angry Christians don’t react the way extremist Muslims do when they’re offended—otherwise they may have more than their heads cut off,” said Bill Donohue. He also challenged James Knowles, the president and CEO of the Roger Smith Hotel (and artist-in-residence), to substitute Muhammad for Jesus and display him during Ramadan.

The Catholic League contacted approximately 500 organizations about this assault. Our allied list contains scores of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim Buddhist and Hindu organizations, as well as secular groups, that share our concerns about religious hate speech and the degradation of our culture. We called upon them to boycott the hotel. As Donohue said, “The Roger Smith Hotel is morally bankrupt. It is the goal of the Catholic League to make it financially bankrupt as well.”

The reaction of the public was heartening. The hotel was

bombarded with angry phone calls and e-mails, and not just from Catholics. This, in turn, led to a surge in Catholic League membership. Unfortunately, it also led to a surge in hate mail against us.

Kiera McCaffrey appeared on several TV shows and granted many interviews to the press. Donohue debated the artist three times, once on TV and twice on radio. The media were very fair to both of them.

As we've said before, not a Lenten season goes by without an attack on Christianity. This year was worse than most. From a teacher who wiped ashes off the forehead of a high school student, to the Jesus-tomb "Titanic Fraud" to "Chocolate Jesus," it was open season on our religion. But the Catholic League fought back, and came out on top.