

CMU DUPLICITY



A female student at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) dressed as the pope while appearing naked from the waist down at the annual art school parade. Her pubic hair was shaved in the shape of a cross; she passed out condoms to the public.

Administrators are reviewing this incident to see "if our community standards or laws were violated."

Bill Donohue raises several questions about what happened:

CMU did not have to ponder what to do about a recent incident involving one of its fraternities: it simply suspended the students, as well as the entire Beta Theta Pi fraternity, for taking sexual pictures and videos inside the frat house and then emailing them to other members; an investigation is pending. But when it comes to a female student who walks the streets naked from the waist down while mocking the pope, the administrators are much more relaxed: she has not been suspended during a probe of this matter.

"The Freedom of Expression Policy" at CMU prizes individual expression, but it is not absolute: it explicitly ties rights to responsibilities. Perhaps most important, the "Carnegie Mellon Code" says students "are expected to meet the highest standards of personal, ethical and moral conduct possible." It would seem axiomatic that the offending student violated these strictures.

If CMU tolerates this incident, invoking no sanctions whatsoever, then it is opening a door it may regret. What if instead of shaved pubic hair in the shape of a cross, a student chooses to depict a swastika?

CMU's decision not to suspend this female student, who publicly ridiculed Catholics and violated the local ordinance on public nudity, while invoking sanctions against the frat boys for offensive behavior behind closed doors, is legally problematic and morally indefensible.

Contact Gina Casalegno, dean of students: ginac@andrew.cmu.edu