

DIVERSITY INCLUDES ANTI-CATHOLICISM ON NATION'S CAMPUSES

Few colleges have not embraced the concept of multiculturalism. In theory, multiculturalism means greater tolerance for the diversity that the nation's many races, ethnic groups and religions bring to our society. But in practice, it often means a curious tolerance for certain types of bigotry: bashing whites, men and Catholics are some of the most prominent exceptions.

This past fall, two colleges, one in Illinois (Highland Community College) and the other in New Jersey (Middlesex County College), not only showed remarkable tolerance for anti-Catholicism, they seemed to justify it as an expression of multiculturalism, properly understood. Both instances triggered a response from the Catholic League. Because of Gov. Christie Todd Whitman's past record of tolerating anti-Catholicism in New Jersey, the league took its case directly to her.

The October-November edition of the Highland Chronicle, the newspaper of Highland Community College, featured an illustration by a student of a naked woman crucified to a cross with the inscription, "Bad Faith," placed above her head, and the words, "The Denial of Women's Rights," alongside her. On November 13, Dr. Donohue wrote a letter Highland Community College president Dr. Ruth Mercedes Smith asking her to join with him in denouncing this bigoted attack on Catholicism.

Dr. Donohue answered her reply with the following letter:

December 4, 1995

Dr. Ruth Mercedes Smith
President
Highland Community College
2998 West Pearl City Road
Freeport, IL 61032-9341

Dear Dr. Smith:

Thank you for your remarkable letter of November 20. It was of great interest to learn that anti-Catholicism is used on your campus as a “learning situation” and that it enhances “the growth of students.” It certainly has been a learning situation for me to know that a college president has such an open mind about bigotry. But I’m still a little confused. Aside from tolerating Catholic bashing on your campus, are there any other forms of prejudice that you think add to “the growth of students”? Let me offer a few examples.

Will you now allow your students to “grow” even further by introducing them to the pedagogical value of bashing Jews? Surely an illustration that offended African Americans might provide grist for discussion. The cultural heritage of Native Americans offers much fodder for insult and caricature. And while you’re redefining the meaning of multiculturalism for the benefit of Roman Catholics, will you now invite your students to share their “philosophies, ideas, and insights” regarding an invidious portrayal of homosexuals?

You say, too, that you want students to see “all sides” of an argument. Accordingly, you should not hesitate to share with me how students on your campus are presented with both sides of the following issues: slavery; serial killing; incest; genocide; segregation; apartheid; and rape.

It is not every day that I am afforded a glimpse at the mind-set of an unrepentant relativist. Just one more question: how can you be sure of anything I have just written? That should provide hours worth of entertainment just trying to

deconstruct it.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.
President