

# FASHION STATEMENTS

There was this picture of an particularly ugly-looking bare-chested young man holding what looked to be a football-shaped something or other with a handle on it. What got the attention of Bernadette Brady were the big rosary beads that were hung around his neck.

Tongue-in-cheek, Brady called Moschino, the Madison Avenue store that ran the ad, and asked how much the rosary beads were. Perplexed, the person said it was not the rosary beads that were for sale, but the football-shaped pocketbook. Rick Hinshaw took it from there, registering a complaint with the smart-alecky store.

Moschino was lucky the Catholic League didn't react the way the Vatican did when it spotted some ads it found offensive. In July, Italian designers released their fall-winter collections in Rome, with more attention paid to their political statements than to their apparel.

One designer announced he would play a CD recording of the pope singing a Gregorian chant while another planned to have his models drink

Holy Water. The Vatican wasn't amused by the former's misappropriation of the pope's work and threatened a lawsuit over copyright infringement.

The way the *New York Times* explains it, "Fashion now is invoking the Lord's name not in vain, but out of New Age vanity." That's probably true, but it hardly makes these fashion statements less offensive. Besides, isn't there some New Age guru or song they can pan?

The richness of the Catholic tradition gives designers much to feed on, but that doesn't justify abusing our heritage to make a quick buck.