

# FLORIDA EDUCATION CHIEF SOUNDS OFF

On April 12, Charlie Crist, Florida's Commissioner of Education, sent a strong letter of protest over the decision of Florida Atlantic University to host the controversial play, "Corpus Christi"; it was sent to many interested parties. An excerpt appears below:

How could administrators at FAU have shown such poor judgement in spending taxpayers' money for this purpose? Reflexively, they cite "academic freedom" as the rationale. Of course "academic freedom" is the final refuge in which professors hide when confronted with the absurdity and arrogance of their decisions. It is a wasteland totally unmoored from standards, where activity can be justified if it exceeds our "comfort level" by "challenging" our preconceptions.

Unfortunately, "Corpus Christi" does not illuminate our understanding of divinity. Stripped of its shock value, it is simply a sophomoric treatment of the Crucifixion. And in the end, all it "challenges" is this: Our "comfort level" in the leadership of FAU.

Perhaps these leaders should have considered who would not sponsor the play before they decided to enfold it in the cloak of academic freedom.

First, no private organization in Florida was willing to pay to have the play presented to the audience. Why? Because the play is so ferociously unappealing it would never turn a profit. Surely, in spending taxpayers' money, universities have some duty to reach the broadest possible audience with information.

Second, no newspaper would bring the play to the masses by printing a script because the language is so foul. If the Palm

Beach Post thinks "Corpus Christi" shows great literary merit, why doesn't it print the text for its readers? Because if it did, it would lose part of its readership, and therefore its revenue. Instead, the newspaper encourages the university to do it. With your money.

If this bit of hypocrisy were not enough, the Palm Beach Post then rails against the Florida Legislature for threatening to withhold money from FAU in response to "Corpus Christi." Apparently, the newspaper hasn't heard of "legislative prerogative." It's a phrase that acknowledges the Legislature's ability to take almost any action without fear of limitation or consequence. In that sense, it's a lot like academic freedom.

Maybe FAU had a point after all.