

GAINESVILLE COLLEGE REMOVES OFFENSIVE ART AFTER PROTEST

The Catholic League began its protest of an art exhibit at a Gainesville college on February 28. On March 12, we declared victory.

It was on February 28 that we learned of an art exhibit at Santa Fe Community College in Gainesville, Florida; it began on February 8 and was to run through March 29. The school decided to host an exhibit by Pat Payne, "A Look at Violence in Religious and Sexual Imagery," that depicted the following:

Jesus being sodomized

Jesus with pierced genitalia

Jesus being masturbated by a woman

After William Donohue watched a video of the WCJB-TV (Gainesville) news story on the art, he blasted the school in a news release.

"This is the Lenten treat that Santa Fe Community College has chosen to present to Christians," Donohue said. He then explained that he would take his complaint to the president of the college, the school's trustees and those members of the Florida state legislature whose duty it is to oversee education funding. "We are asking that they use the maximum degree of powers vested in them to deal with hate speech," Donohue said.

Leslie Lambert, chairperson of the Creative Arts and Humanities Department, defended the art saying, "If it causes people to stop and think, and to confirm their own value system or to reevaluate their value system, then I am pleased

as an educator.” Donohue responded saying that “if she wants people to stop and think, then why doesn’t she substitute Martin Luther King for Jesus and then explain to African American students that this isn’t hate speech—it’s just about getting people to think. Or maybe she could donate a portrait of her own mother being sodomized. That would work.”

Donohue also criticized the faculty for not condemning the art. He said they would only complain if someone were caught smoking while viewing the exhibit.

On the same day as our news release, Patrick Scully, the league’s director of communications, led off the evening news on WCJB-TV by blasting the exhibit, the school and Leslie Lambert. In the same news clip was the school’s president, Dr. Jackson Sasser, and Professor Lambert. The best Sasser could do was to say that a warning sign had been posted outside the exhibit and that a faculty member was assigned to the area. Lambert repeated her observation that the art was designed to make people think. She did not explain why some might be given to vomiting instead.

On March 12 it was all over but the shouting. Feeling the pressure, Santa Fe Community College announced that it had moved the offensive artwork from a public exhibit to a professor’s office. “It’s great news to learn that this obscene and blasphemous artwork has been dumped in some professor’s office,” said Donohue.

In the Catholic League’s news release on the subject, Donohue said it was outrageous that a publicly-funded college had decided to profane the sacred. He then said that “The best way to resolve problems like these in the future is to deny anyone a Ph.D. unless he or she has worked in a blue collar job for at least two years.” Donohue personally recommended “shoveling coal,” though he was open to waiting on tables and tending bar. “This would not only provide a reality check for aspiring intellectuals,” he offered, “it would actually give them a

chance to meet the proletariat whom they are so fond of writing about."

The president of the college, Dr. Jackson Sasser, said that as a man of faith he would not want to see the exhibit. We think this is too weak. Surely he could have expressed his condemnation of the exhibit at a college function. You can write to him at Office of the President, Santa Fe Community College, 3000 NW 83rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606.