

GOVERNOR WHITMAN'S IDEA OF DIVERSITY

The notorious anti-Catholic play, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*, was performed at Middlesex County College December 7-10. Because the college receives state funding, Catholic League president William Donohue wrote to New Jersey Governor Christie Todd Whitman asking her to respond to this outrage. His letter of November 22 was also addressed to Dr. John Bakum, president of Middlesex County College and to Mr. Jerome Katcher, the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Middlesex; Terence Kenny, the president of the North-Central New Jersey Chapter of the Catholic League and Bishop Edward T. Hughes, Bishop of Metuchen, also received copies of the letter.

In a news release on the subject, William Donohue offered the following remarks:

"When *Sister Mary Ignatius* appeared in New York in the early 1980s, it drew fire from the Anti-Defamation League, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, the American Jewish Committee, the Catholic League and many others. Play critics from Clive Barnes to Frank Rich dubbed it anti-Catholic, as well they should have: it is perhaps the most anti-Catholic play ever produced.

"If it is wrong to use government monies to promote religion, it should be equally wrong to use government monies to bash religion. And if it is right to promote the values of tolerance and diversity on government-funded campuses, it should be objectionable for such campuses to trash Roman Catholicism. By remaining mute, Middlesex County College officials have sanctioned the play.

"Even worse is Gov. Whitman. In the summer of 1994, she issued

a public statement condemning a boardwalk vendor for selling anti-gay T-shirts while saying nothing about vile anti-Catholicism on the state-funded campus of William Paterson College. More recently, Gov. Whitman failed to respond to another incident of Catholic bashing, namely the production of *Nine*, a play that portrays a nun transformed into a 'voluptuous whore'; Gov. Whitman is the Honorary Chairman of the Paper Mill Playhouse Board of Trustees (where *Nine* was performed) and offered no reply when I asked her to do so on September 22.

"Gov. Whitman owes Catholics in New Jersey an explanation for her silence in the wake of taxpayer-funded assaults on Roman Catholicism."

In response to a letter written to Gov. Whitman, her office sent the following letter to Dr. Donohue:

[Note: Drop in letter from Secretary Lonna R. Hooks and then print the letter from Bill to Hooks]

The letter from Secretary Hooks earned the following reply from Dr. Donohue:

December 15, 1995

Hon. Lonna R. Hooks
Secretary of State
State of New Jersey
CN 300
Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Secretary Hooks:

Thank you for your letter of December 5 regarding the Middlesex County College production of *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*. I would like clarification on several points you raised.

You say that the Governor's office "must be cautious of

keeping issues of Church and State separate.” I would agree and that is why I object when the government sponsors an attack on my religion. Contrary to what you say, the law is not compromised when a public official speaks out against government-funded bigotry. The First Amendment guarantee of freedom of speech extends to public officials, and that is why there is no legal deterrent to Gov. Whitman expressing her dismay over the irresponsibility of Middlesex County College.

You say that the Whitman administration does not want to “inhibit artistic expression.” But what if the artistic expression represents bigotry? Do you expect me to believe that Gov. Whitman would be silent if anti-gays represented their views via a government-sponsored artistic medium?

Your embrace of “diversity” and “mutual respect for each other’s culture” obviously seems to stop short of including respect for the diversity that Roman Catholicism brings to American culture. Perhaps you can explain why.

I take offense at your comment that “if you feel you must address this matter outside of the Roman Catholic community I would not interfere.” It is not the Roman Catholic community that I need to repair to, rather it is your office. I would like to remind you that it is the state of New Jersey, not the Catholic Church, that is responsible for funding a Catholic bashing exhibition at Middlesex County College.

As for not interfering with a public statement by the Catholic League about this matter, there is no need to cite your allegiance to freedom of speech: you have no power to stop us in the first place, making perfunctory as well as moot your graciousness.

Your letter deserves wide distribution. We will see to it by publishing it in the next edition of *Catalyst*, our monthly publication that reaches every bishop and Congressmen in the United States, as well as our members nationwide.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue
President