

HOLOCAUST “HATE ART”

No sane person denies the horror of the Holocaust or excuses those responsible for it. Unfortunately, it needs to be said time and again that it was the Nazis, *and no one but the Nazis*, who bear sole responsibility for what happened. Somebody needs to tell this to Fritz Hirschberger.

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Maitland, Florida, is hosting Fritz Hirschberger's "Indifference—The Sur-Rational." Hirschberger, a Holocaust survivor, uses art to blame the Catholic Church for the Holocaust.

One of his displays is called "The Last Supper at Evian or The Fish Stinks First From The Head." Its depiction of the Last Supper shows delegates who met at Evian, France and did nothing to protect the Jews. There is a portrayal of three clerics entitled, "The Sun and the Moon Shine on All: The Mute, The Blind, The Deaf." Then there is "The Concordat," a portrait of a Nazi and a cardinal, with a caption that essentially says the Catholic Church sold out the Jews by getting in bed with the Nazis. Other representations project the same theme.

William Donohue wrote to those responsible for sponsoring this hate art. He wrote to Dr. Stephen Feinstein, who is the curator of the Hirschberger exhibit at the University of Minnesota; Tess Wise of the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center in Florida; Peg Richardson, Director of Cultural Affairs for the Florida Department of State; and Karen Plunkett of the United Arts of Central Florida. Here is the text of his remarks:

"My primary objection to this work is its malicious characterization of Catholicism. To associate the Catholic clergy with Hitler is a vicious lie. Indeed, according to

Israeli diplomat, Pinchas Lapide, Pope Pius XII was responsible for saving as many as 860,000 Jewish lives. No one matched this figure. Indeed, fully 85 percent of Jews survived in Italy because of his efforts. Moreover, the record in other Catholic nations, in contrast to what happened in Protestant countries, was also quite good. That was one reason among many why Hitler hated the pope.

"Hitler also killed millions of Catholics, and thousands of priests. To put Catholicism in the same bed with Nazism is historically dishonest and morally objectionable. Criticism is one thing, but this is slanderous."

Donohue also fired off a letter to the *Orlando Sentinel*. Philip Bishop, a correspondent at the newspaper, had the gall to say "Sometimes the interfaith dialogue is best aided by a little sober truth telling." Donohue replied that "Bishop's general comment is correct but he shows himself to be anything but sober when he cites Hirschberger's work as an example."

Then he concluded by saying, "It would be more accurate to say that Hirschberger's malicious distortion of the historical record fuels anti-Catholicism and is therefore counterproductive to interfaith dialogue."

The politicization of art is nothing new, but the use of this genre of communication to slander Pius XII is particularly reprehensible. We await the response to Donohue's letters.