

# LOS ANGELES COLLEGE CANCELS OFFENSIVE LECTURES

The summer no sooner began when the Catholic League learned that two anti-Catholic lectures were scheduled to take place at Pierce Community College in Los Angeles. The lectures, given as part of the Encore/Oasis continuing education program, were titled "The Sex Lives of the Popes" and "Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church." Both lectures were cancelled following our vigorous protest.

The lectures scheduled for August 5 and 12 were to be given by Charlotte Poe. Ms. Poe has no academic credentials and was described in the school's catalog as a "Freethinker," a group hostile to religion in general and Catholicism in particular. William Donohue wrote to the sponsors of the Encore/Oasis program regarding these lectures.

In his letter, Donohue said that the first lecture was based on a book by Nigel Cawthorne; he has been described as a journalist who appears to specialize in the sensational. The second lecture was based on a book by Emmett McLoughlin, a former Catholic priest who has made a name for himself denouncing the Catholic Church.

Donohue asked the sponsors to take note of the fact that all the other scheduled lectures in the program were to be presented by qualified academics, none of whom was slated to attack other religions. He cited as an example, "Introduction to Islam," a lecture taught by a professor of theology at Boston College. He then zeroed in on the heart of the matter:

"I would like to know your thoughts on this subject. Would you defend, as a matter of academic

freedom, a lecture entitled 'Sex Lives of Prominent Rabbis' taught by someone with no academic credentials and who belonged to an anti-Semitic organization? Similarly, would you defend a lecture on 'Crime and Immorality in Islam—from Muhammad to 9-11' taught by someone with no academic credentials and who belonged to an anti-Muslim organization?"

The sponsors of the Encore/Oasis series, which included both private and public sources, got the message, apologized and cancelled the lectures.

The reason Donohue never asked for the lectures to be withdrawn is because he didn't want to give the anti-Catholic bigots an opportunity to brand us as censors. What he did instead was to inform the sponsors that they had nearly a month to respond before he notified "the media across the U.S. about this issue." It worked.