

# MEDIA EXPLODE OVER CATHOLIC DRESS CODE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the media reaction to an Indiana Catholic school's dress code:

Catholic schools have a dress code. Yeshivas have a dress code. Many Muslim schools have a dress code. Why is it that Jewish and Muslim dress codes never seem to infuriate the media, but Catholic ones drive them crazy? Like the little boy with his nose pressed up against the storefront window, media voyeurs cannot take their eyes off of Catholic traditions.

The dress code for First Communion, as virtually everyone knows, requires a white dress or skirt for girls. But the parents of a student at St. John the Evangelist in St. John, Indiana decided to violate it: they announced that their daughter would be wearing a pant suit. Obviously, they were denied. (The girl was not denied her First Communion, just her participation in the sacrament with her classmates.)

The only real story here is the media's reaction to it; it is otherwise a non-event. Yet they are hyperventilating everywhere, including overseas.

The "story" has been picked by scores of media outlets, ranging from the *Washington Post* to the ABC affiliates in Philadelphia, Houston, Chicago, New York, Raleigh-Durham, and Los Angeles. It has also been picked up by media outlets in Canada, the United Kingdom, Morocco, Australia, Istanbul, and Poland. To our knowledge, it has yet to run in any nation in the South China Seas, but this could change.

We know the media are obsessed with Catholic schools, but in the event they want to divert their eyes elsewhere, we recommend the following.

In Hempstead, New York, there is a school, the Crescent School, that provides for "Top Education in an Islamic Environment." Girls in grades 6-12 must wear a navy blue jilbab (a full sleeved gown), navy blue/black pants, plain white hijab, white socks and black shoes (no heels, open toes, flip flops or fancy party shoes are allowed).

At the Hebrew Academy in New York City, girls cannot wear blouses or shirts that are sleeveless or have short sleeves. Skirts may not have slits in them. Make-up is prohibited.

So what if the parents at the Hebrew Academy object? The penalties are specific. "Do not send your child to school if he/she is not dressed to code. Students will not be allowed in class unless properly attired....Should a student arrive improperly dressed, he/she will be sent to the office to wait until his/her parents come to school with a change of clothing."

By the way, many public schools also have dress codes. Just this week, a third-grade boy in a Jacksonville, Florida school was sent home because he dyed his hair blue for the school picture. That's because the boy violated the school's policy. "Hair shall be clean and well combed or brushed. Extreme hairstyles will not be acceptable."

Catholic schools did not invent dress codes, but for some reason the media act as if they did. We know what's driving this mania, and that is why we at the Catholic League have a job. The bigots keep us quite busy. Indeed, by any reasonable measure, we're considered a growth industry.