

MUDSLINGING AT MUHLENBERG

Muhlenberg is a small college in Eastern Pennsylvania that, up until now, has never caught our attention. That changed when we learned that a controversial statement about Our Blessed Mother was made on campus; we also objected to a slam at Pope Pius XII.

In the library of the school stood an icon of Mary, complete with a statement that chastised Catholics for not recognizing her Jewish origins. It also indicted Pius for being "silent" during the Holocaust. Here is the text of William Donohue's letter to Muhlenberg president, Dr. Arthur Taylor.

"I recently learned of the controversy over the icon of Mary and was disheartened to find out that you support Chaplain King's position on this issue. While I do not want to unnecessarily continue what has already been a lengthy exchange on this matter, I do feel that as president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization that some further comments are required.

"It astounds me that anyone would make the case that Catholics are less than willing to recognize Mary's Jewishness. That she is more commonly referred to as the Virgin Mary, or Our Blessed Mother, in no way suggests that Catholics have failed to come to terms with her ethnicity. In the same vein, the Albanian ancestry of Mother Teresa is well-known, yet few give primacy to her ethnicity when considering her status; only a prig would carp at this.

"The attack on Pope Pius XII, while popular these days, has been more than adequately rebutted by Catholic and non-Catholic scholars alike. Enclosed find a copy of the Catholic League volume on this subject, as well as an excerpt from a new book on Pius. Also enclosed is a copy of the December 22, 1997 *New York Times* op-ed page ad that the Catholic League

published on this issue.

“Finally, there is another issue that is separate from these concerns. Having spent most of my professional career in higher education, I know how vital it is to have an open forum for debate. But what I don’t understand is the venue of this controversy: to use a chapel (as opposed to an art gallery or library) to make a political statement against Catholicism strikes me as being reprehensible.

“Thank you for your consideration.”

Donohue has not heard from Dr. Taylor yet. We hope he gets the message.