

PICTURE THIS

Sometimes it's not the written word that gets our back up, it's a picture. Take, for example, the following.

On the Monday of Holy Week, the *New York Daily News* printed a big picture taken by an AP reporter of participants in a Holy Week procession in Spain. The byline was innocent enough—it explained that since the 15th century penitents adorn hoods to hide their identities. But the photo showed the persons wearing white hoods with cone heads. Any American looking at the picture would easily mistake the hooded individuals as Klansmen.

On Easter Sunday, the *Suburban Trends* newspaper of Northern New Jersey had a picture of a local homeowner's novel way of commemorating The Last Supper: on his front lawn was a representation that featured flamingos in lieu of the apostles. It was placed on the front page.

On April 17, the *Los Angeles Times* flagged a color photo of a black man dressed as a Catholic bishop. Below the photo it said "Archbishop Edmund Gilbert could face death by hanging." The headline of the story read, "A Man of the Cloth in the Dock," with a tag line below that said, "a prominent churchman stands accused of murdering a 15-year-old schoolgirl." Six paragraphs into the story we learn that he's a Baptist.

Peter Vallone is Speaker of the City Council in New York. He's running for Mayor. On April 12, the *New York Times* ran a story on Vallone with a photo. The caption read, "Council Speaker Peter F. Vallone goes to Mass every day, but he's not so charitable to his political opponents these days." One of our members, Eugene Biancheri, complained. And guess what? He not only was extended an apology, reporters were called in by the editors and told to be more sensitive to Catholics! William Donohue confirmed this story.

On May 8, when we saw on the website of Matt Drudge a picture of actor Robert Blake dressed as a priest—in a story about his alleged role in killing his wife—we asked why they didn't feature him as a detective. After all, Blake is mostly known for his role in "Baretta." The priest photo was quickly taken down.

Finally, a Catholic woman and some nuns from the Sisters of St. Francis in Fairmont, Minnesota, spotted a store selling a T-shirt they found objectionable. The shirt was a promo for a rock band called "Rage Against the Machine," and featured five guys dressed as nuns carrying rifles. But they don't have to worry about anyone wearing them in their neck of the woods: the lady bought them all and quickly dumped them in the trash.

These examples are subtle reminders of how ideas are crafted in a culture. And how important it is that we challenge misrepresentations.