

RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE IN EDUCATION

There is hardly a school left anywhere in the country that isn't touting the virtues of tolerance and diversity.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the subject of religion, these values are often noticeably absent. It would be more accurate to say that intolerance—not tolerance—governs the way many schools behave when matters religious are front and center. All of the following stories are taken from news accounts over the last few months.

A teacher was fired from a public school in San Diego because she played a song that had the word "Christ" in it. The teacher, who had been at the school for five years, was told that her after-school dance class offended a school clerk when the employee reportedly heard the word "Jesus" mentioned in a song (it was actually "Christ" that was on the recording). The teacher was told by her school supervisor that "the name of Jesus was offensive." Days later she was fired for reasons unrelated to this incident. The teacher has acquired the services of a top-notch law firm.

Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper" and two portraits of Jesus have been on display for at least 50 years in a junior high school in Anna, Illinois. Now they've been put in storage. Instead of fighting Americans United for Separation of Church and State, school officials wouldn't spend the money to defeat the censors in court.

In the July/August *Catalyst*, we mentioned that an eight-year-old girl from Frenchtown, New Jersey wanted to sing a religious song in a school talent show but was prohibited from doing so by school authorities. Well, we have some surprising news: even the ACLU thought this was going too far and has joined the lawsuit on the side of free speech.

Left-wing bigots are busy censoring speech in higher education as well. A freshman at Victor Valley Community College in southern California was given an "F" for mentioning "God" in one of her papers. The student, a middle-age mother, was told by her instructor, Michael Shefchik, that the name God (which she dropped 41 times in a paper titled "In God We Trust") would "offend others in class." She is receiving legal help from a civil rights group.

Florida Atlantic University is giving a course in its Lifelong Learning division called, "The Unholy Trinity." The course is being advertised as one that addresses various symbols that allegedly divide people against each other, but in reality is being used to attack the Catholic Church. It is being taught by a playwright with no background in history. Fortunately, a professor emerita from Westfield State College in Massachusetts has arranged to monitor this one for us.

National History Day* (NHD) has a nice ring to it, but like so much going on in higher education, it has been infected with the virus of political correctness. In its flier for its next contest (June 11-15, 2006), *Taking a Stand in History: People, Ideas and Events*, it says the following: "The student might choose an NHD topic involving a situation where a person or group failed to act. For example, what were the circumstances leading to Pope Pius XII's decision not to oppose Adolph Hitler before and during World War II?"

The person in charge of this operation is Cathy Gorn, Executive Director, National History Day, 0119 Cecil Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 (phone: 301-314-9739). The following comments, written by Bill Donohue, were contained in a letter he wrote to her trying to set the record straight. You may want to use some of these points in your letter to her:

"Quite frankly, this is outrageous. What is presented as a matter of historical fact is, in fact, nothing more than a

contentious position taken by some students of the issue. It was not for nothing that the *New York Times* ran two editorials during the war praising the Vatican for opposing Hitler. Here is what the *Times* said on Christmas Day, 1941: 'The voice of Pius XII is a lonely voice in the silence and darkness enveloping Europe this Christmas.' One year later, the *Times* wrote: 'This Christmas more than ever he [Pope Pius XII] is a lonely voice crying out of the silence of a continent.'"

Donohue went on to say how ironic it is that there is a new book by Northwestern University professor and noted journalist, Laurel Leff, that is highly critical of the silence that marked the reaction of the *New York Times* to the Holocaust. That this book should appear just before the publication of Rabbi David Dalin's work, *The Myth of Hitler's Pope*, is even more ironic. Yet it is the Catholic Church, not the *New York Times*, that National History Day mentions for being silent during the Holocaust.

None of this is by accident—it's all by design. The movement to erase any last vestige of our religious heritage from public life is gaining ground among our cultural elites and in the courts. They may sing the virtues of tolerance and diversity, but their actions betray their words. If these little totalitarians get their way, they will censor every religious expression on the grounds that some might be offended. That they offend the rest of us seems not to matter.

Anti-Catholic bias infects all sectors of society, but nowhere is it more hypocritically evident than in the hallowed halls of academe.

***NB:** For updated information on National History Day, please click [here](#).