

RIZZOLI BOOKSTORE PROFILES OFFENSIVE ART

On August 17, a branch of the international bookstore, Rizzoli, placed in its storefront window a picture of blasphemous art that was offensive to Christians. The branch at 31 West 57th Street in New York had on window display a picture of the Last Supper that showed a bare-breasted woman standing in the middle of the table with her arms outstretched; men and women were seated on both sides of her conversing. The picture was taken from a book entitled *Visionaire 28*, published by Visionaire.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to the store's manager, John Deen, to say that he thought it an impropriety for a prestigious bookstore in mid-town Manhattan to give such high profile to a display that many Catholics might find offensive. When Deen said he did not think the picture was offensive, Donohue asked him whether he might think it offensive to picture Martin Luther King with a swastika on his forehead surrounded by a bare-breasted woman. Deen said that he would.

Donohue said he was not asking that the book be removed from the store, but he did request that such offensive pictures not be placed in the storefront window. When Deen said that other pictures in the book might be put in the window, a copy of the book was purchased for \$150.

The book is a collection of contemporary portraits based on the Bible and most of them are non-offensive. But in addition to the "Last Supper," the following portraits appear: a) the "Virgin Mary" is a veiled woman with her breasts partially exposed wearing pink panties b) "Salome and John the Baptist" (a contribution by "Piss Christ" artist Andres Serrano) features a young blond with hooks as nails wearing red fishnet

stockings squatted, with legs spread, in front of the bloody head of John the Baptist c) "Judas' Kiss" is a homoerotic picture of a man kissing a boy.

In a statement to the media, Donohue said that "The editors are irresponsible, the contributors are rip-off artists and Rizzoli is just plain dumb: we will feature all this in our 1999 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism."

Rizzoli did not place the other offensive pictures in the window again