

ROGERS STATE UNIV. HOSTS ANTI-CATHOLIC ART

Rogers State University is offering an art appreciation telecourse that features anti-Catholic imagery. According to a news report on the subject, there is “a depiction of “a Madonna with an exposed potbelly dragging a cross into a religious ceremony being led by a priest with two Devil’s horns.” Also on display are depictions of cannibalism. The university is defending the art as freedom of speech.

Catholic League president William Donohue outlined the league’s position today:

“We are writing to the two governing boards of Rogers State University asking them to consider the appropriateness of this telecourse. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education and the Oklahoma Board of Regents exercise considerable authority over this public institution and therefore have an obligation not to violate the public trust. Surely there can be no public interest in using public monies to assault the sensibilities of minority groups, and that would certainly include Oklahoma Catholics.

“What makes this scenario so perverse is not simply the abuse of public funding, it is the fact that the stated purpose of this course is to counter the prejudicial attitudes that some whites harbor against Latinos. However, it is not prejudice, per se, that bothers those who defend this course, it is certain types of prejudice, and not among them is anti-Catholicism. If there were a course designed to check anti-Semitism that featured art that offended Native Americans, everyone would see the hypocrisy in a New York minute.

“Rogers State University has a free speech right to insult Catholics and the Catholic League has a free speech right to

confront the school. But that doesn't put us on a level playing field; there is still the question of morality. To be exact, as this case illustrates, not all exercises of free speech are morally defensible. Accordingly, when the State Regents meets on June 30 in Oklahoma City, we hope they get beyond legalisms and vote to do what's right."