

# SACHA BARON COHEN'S BLACK JESUS: THE COLOR DOESN'T MATTER

News reports about the upcoming movie, "Bruno," featuring Sacha Baron Cohen of "Borat" fame, say there is a black model called Jesus who wears a loincloth and a crown of thorns. Some media pundits are saying this is sure to offend Christians.

Catholic League president Bill Donohue speaks to this issue today:

"In many African American neighborhoods there are Catholic and Protestant churches that display statues of a black Jesus; artistic renditions of a black Jesus are also commonplace throughout the country. No one but racists and the hyper-sensitive object. What matters is not the color of Jesus, it is how the Jesus-figure is portrayed. If the depiction of Jesus in this movie is not offensive, then the Catholic League will not protest. If it is, we will.

"Critics of the Catholic League say we do object to images of a black Jesus. They cite our objections to black photographer Renee Cox who was depicted as Jesus in 2001, our complaints against hip-hop artist Kanye West on the cover of *Rolling Stone* with a crown of thorns in 2005, and our problems with the Chocolate Jesus sculpture in 2007. All these critics miss the point.

"Had Cox managed to keep her clothes on when being photographed as Jesus, we would not have registered the same complaint (though we would have noted the silliness of portraying a man as a woman). The *Rolling Stone* controversy was all about the exploitative picture of West with blood streaming down his face, and the fact that the cover story, 'The Passion of Kanye West,' disclosed his self-confessed

passion for pornography. Those who said we would not have objected to a Vanilla Jesus don't get it: our concern over the sculpture was the fact that this larger-than-life figure was displayed with exposed genitals at Easter time in a mid-town Manhattan hotel where visitors were invited to eat him.

"In other words, whether we go after 'Bruno' depends entirely on how Jesus is portrayed—not on the color of his skin."