

SMITHSONIAN PULLS VIDEO; WILD UPROAR ENSUES

On November 30, following a complaint registered by the Catholic League, the Smithsonian Institution pulled a video showing ants crawling all over Jesus on the Cross. The ensuing uproar was worldwide: the artistic community exploded in anger at both the Smithsonian and the Catholic League. Forums were held in many American cities, as well as in London, denouncing what we did.

The story began with an article on the Smithsonian exhibition, "Hide/Seek," by Penny Starr, a writer for CNSNews.com; it is a media outlet run by Catholic League advisor Brent Bozell. Bill Donohue received a call at home the night before from a reporter for the New York Post asking his opinion of the video. He branded it "hate speech" and his comments appeared the next day in the paper; he was able to see the video online.

When he got to work on November 30, Donohue issued a news release saying he was contacting the House and Senate Appropriations Committees asking them to "reconsider federal financing" of the Smithsonian; the exhibition was privately funded. Donohue took this approach because the museum receives 70 percent of its financing from the federal government, and 80 percent of Americans are Christian.

Donohue outlined one very simple principle: if it is wrong for the government to pick the pocket of the taxpayers to promote religion, it should be equally wrong to pick their pockets to insult religion. No one he debated—and there were many—could offer a cogent reply. Most simply refused to comment.

Joining with the Catholic League in protesting the vile video were Rep. John Boehner and Rep. Eric Cantor. They, too,

questioned the propriety of a government-funded institution hosting anti-Christian art. Within hours of these complaints, the Smithsonian released a statement saying they pulled the video.

The video was part of a larger gay and lesbian exhibition; it featured totally nude men kissing, men masturbating, sado-masochistic depictions, etc. All in a venue funded by the taxpayers at Christmastime.

Despite stories to the contrary, the Catholic League did not ask for the exhibition to be shut down. It did not ask for the video to be pulled. It did not ask for federal funding to be cut off. It simply asked for government officials to reconsider federal funding.

For this, we were subjected to an onslaught of the most outrageously abusive speech, receiving threatening letters from across the Atlantic, all through December. But we won, and they know it.