

# SPIN DOCTORS DEFEND “CORPUS CHRISTI”

Readers of *Catalyst* are aware that over the past few months we have protested the anti-Catholic play, “Corpus Christi.” The Terrence McNally play, which opened Off-Broadway in New York in 1998 (and never made it to Broadway because it was so bad), was recently performed at Florida Atlantic University (FAU) and is scheduled to be performed at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne (IPFW) in August. In both instances, those who defended the play proved themselves to be the ultimate spin doctors.

Richard Gamble is a professor at FAU. Acting like a schoolboy who was beaten up in the playground, he lashed out at William Donohue in the pages of the *Florida Catholic*. Donohue’s response was also published in the Catholic newspaper.

Gamble began his tirade by referring to the Catholic League as the “so-called Catholic League.” Donohue’s riposte was to say, “What his point is, God only knows, but then again I do not teach at the so-called Florida Atlantic University.”

More important, Gamble charged that Donohue told “a lie” by saying that the play depicts Christ having sex with the 12 apostles. “Nowhere in this play does the Jesus character (‘Joshua’) have sex with any disciple, nor is this play even about sex.” Donohue dubbed this a “remarkable conclusion.” The fact that no one actually has sex on the stage is irrelevant, Donohue said, “It is the whole point of the play.” He then asked, “What does Gamble think it’s about—redemption.”

Gamble even went so far as to contend that the attacks on the play have caused “irreparable damage” to FAU. Donohue denied the charge and closed by saying, “But it could be argued that it is the result of illogical letters written by some of their

faculty.”

The Fort Wayne *Journal-Gazette* and the *Indianapolis Star* both ran editorials on the play that found great fault with the play’s critics but none at all with play’s content. The *Star*’s editorial was literally hysterical.

The *Journal-Gazette* went bonkers when an Indiana citizen announced he was going to sue IPFW for putting on the play. The Catholic League did not defend suing as the proper course of action, but it also did not defend the newspaper for glossing over the reason why things reached this point.

As Donohue pointed out, had the school’s chancellor, Michael Wartell, acted responsibly and acceded to the league’s modest request, the prospect of a lawsuit might never have materialized. All we asked for was for Wartell to sit down with the participating faculty and students and explain why their free speech rights were hurtful to Christians. Because Wartell did nothing but hide behind the First Amendment—as if that were the sum total of his duties—angry citizens decided to up the ante.

The *Indianapolis Star* was worse. In an editorial of June 13, heroes were made of those who initially defended the play when it opened in New York; they were praised for their devotion to free speech. Donohue informed them that their heroes refused to debate him on TV at that time: every single major playwright in New York who defended the play turned down Donohue’s invitation to debate him.

The rap that the league opposed the play because Jesus was gay was also off base: had the play depicted Christ having sex with 12 women—or one woman—we would have objected just as strongly.

We are pleased that Catholics, and Protestants, in Florida and Indiana made their voices heard. Both schools depend on public money and both are guilty of violating the public trust. We

encourage Christians everywhere to get involved in the culture war and take back their rights.