

STRING OF VICTORIES

he Catholic League scored four recent victories, and did so without costing its members a dime.

The Catholic League supports the right of public schools to have dress codes, provided, of course, that they are reasonably written. One we thought unreasonable was the one being proposed by the Ysleta Independent School District in El Paso, Texas. The code read as follows: "Any type of clothing including but not limited to T-shirts that advertise, support, glorify, or support inappropriate language, gestures, gangs, illegal activities, tobacco, sex, alcohol, illegal drugs, violence, *religious pictures*, or satanic philosophies are not allowed." (Our italics.)

In a letter to Hector Montenegro, Superintendent of the Ysleta Independent School District, we focused on the ban on religious pictures. We also cited a 1997 ruling by the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas, Houston Division, that ruled that school districts could not bar students from wearing rosaries despite the fact that rosaries were used as a gang symbol in the area.

We are pleased to say that the officials of the Ysleta Independent School District have decided that religious messages will be allowed.

The New York Police Department (NYPD) has a cadet training program that covers a lot of ground. It is not unusual for it to go to various civic groups enlisting their support. One such group that the NYPD works with is the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Based on the west coast, the organization has a Tolerance Center in New York.

Acting upon complaints from sources we have chosen to keep anonymous, we wrote the NYPD's Commissioner of Training regarding a particular class offered by the Tolerance Center.

The class, which was being proposed for the cadets, is entitled, "Building Community Trust in a Diverse Post-9/11 Environment."

The problem with the class, we said, was its one-sided story on the role of the Catholic Church during the Holocaust: the Church was blamed for not speaking out against the Holocaust, and there was video footage of fanatical Christian activists saying homosexuals and abortion providers will "burn in hell."

We said it was irresponsible to pass off as an objective account what was really one ideological position on this historical period. Others have contended, including the Catholic League, that the Catholic Church made heroic efforts to rescue Jews and that indeed it did a better job than anyone else in saving Jewish lives. Of the Christian fanatics, we said that to show these people as being representative of Christians would be like "a presentation on the American civil rights movement that ignored Martin Luther King, Jr., showing only the Black Panthers."

We are delighted to report that the NYPD, while it will continue to work with the Wiesenthal Center, has "no plans to include the Wiesenthal Center tolerance programs in our recruit training."

Hershey High School in Hershey, Pennsylvania, featured an April Fool's Day edition of its newspaper that Catholic students didn't think was too funny. In its article, "God vs. Satan," God was presented as saying "Mother Teresa makes one mean salami sandwich." Other comments included, "I accept cash gifts and songs addressed to His Lordship," and, "We've got our fair share of angel hotties." And then there was Satan calling God a "stuffy twit."

In our letter to Dr. Linda Brewer, Superintendent of Schools for the Derry Township School District, we made the point that "In the current public school atmosphere where prayer in the

classroom is banned and honest discussion about religion is stifled, it is baffling why a student publication should be permitted to lampoon God and the Church.” We then asked, “Is it the policy of the Derry Township School District that religious expression must be limited to jokes that make a mockery out of faith?”

A letter from Dr. Brewer made it clear that the student editorial board now understands something about student responsibilities that it apparently didn’t understand before this happened. The message, in other words, has been received.

Finally, we got a complaint from someone that the American Bible Society, headquartered in New York, was carrying Chick publications in its bookstore. These publications, often in the form of small cartoon-like booklets, are found in many public places. They are the work of virulent anti-Catholics, appealing mostly to poorly educated persons.

For example, one of the booklets in the store was entitled, “Are Roman Catholics Christians?” This booklet, written in English and Spanish, says things like, “Billions of dollars have made ‘The Whore’ rich...” Another booklet, “The Death Cookie,” refers to the Eucharist. There is also one called “Holocaust” that claims the Catholic Church funded and ran Hitler’s Gestapo.

A letter of complaint to Dr. Eugene B. Habecker, president of the American Bible Society, was greeted with professionalism. He extended an apology, returned the material to Chick publications and pledged this would never happen again.