

ABERCROMBIE & FITCH BARES MORE THAN ITS BIGOTRY

The Spring Break 2001 catalog of Abercrombie & Fitch resembles a porn magazine aimed at teenagers. It also bashes Catholicism.

Inscribed on the plastic cover of the catalog is "A&F XXX Adventure: Get Wet Set & Go on Spring Break." The publication, which retails for 6 dollars, features male nudity (with a sprinkling of female nudity) and has a "warning label" on the plastic cover that reads, "Editor's Note: Due to Mature Content Parental Consent Suggested For Readers Under Eighteen." The catalog includes an interview with porn star Ron Jeremy.

On page 58, in the "Ask A&F" section, there are two questions posed by Catholic high school students. The questions, and answers, mock nuns and priests; the theme for both is homosexuality. On page 61, readers are advised to adorn their spring break hotel rooms with "palm fronds" that can be taken "for free if you crash a Catholic mass on Palm Sunday." On page 110, there is a review of cult movies. Regarding "Cemetery Man," readers are instructed how they can join in the fun. "One viewing is all it'll take," the piece instructs, "but learning to make wry comments after bashing a dead nun's head to a pulp couldn't hurt either."

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

"Abercrombie & Fitch's marketing department has concluded that the best way to sell its pants is to flash models who don't wear any. The clothes, they are convinced, do not make the man, which is why they feature two naked guys ridding a motor scooter on the cover of their catalog. I think that's the

point. But what do I know? I'm Catholic.

"What I do know is that it doesn't take any guts to bash Catholics these days. Indeed, it's sport with the sexually free crowd that A&F likes to target. In any event, we're going to give Abercrombie & Fitch some free advertising: we're going to let Catholics know exactly what the bad boys at A&F think of their religion. We'll then see who gets the last laugh."

SANTA FE MUSEUM OUTRAGES LOCAL CATHOLICS

The Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, is now featuring an exhibition, "Cyber Arte: Where Tradition Meets Technology." One of the entries, "Our Lady," is a photo collage by Alma Lopez that replaces the traditional image of the Virgin Mary of Guadalupe with a woman in a rose petal bikini; a bare-breasted woman appears below her in place of a cherub. Both women are friends of the artist.

Local Catholics, led by Archbishop Michael Sheehan and parishioners from Our Lady of Guadalupe parish, have protested the depiction as "blasphemous." The museum is a state facility and is supervised by a board of regents. It will meet April 4 to discuss the controversy; the exhibition opened February 25.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"The Museum of International Folk Art is unique in that it is fully-funded and operated by the state. It has a special

obligation, therefore, not to use money from taxpayers for the purpose of abusing their racial, ethnic, religious or cultural affiliations. Moreover, the museum has its own guidelines and that is why the Catholic League has seized upon them in writing a letter to the board of regents.

“Section 7-C says the museum supports the expression of differing opinions ‘in a reasonable manner.’ Well, how reasonable is it to assault the sensibilities of a large portion of the local population? Section 9-A says all proposals must include ‘descriptions of the intended audience.’ We’d love to know their answer to this one. 9-A also says that deliberation must take account of the ‘impact on the community.’ Shedding light on this would be a public service. Finally, curators are told to monitor the ‘response to comments from the public.’ Which is why the regents has its work cut out for it. Our advice? Observe separation of art and state.”

FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY HOSTS “CORPUS CHRISTI”

The Terrence McNally play about a gay Jesus, “Corpus Christi,” will be performed at Florida Atlantic University, March 28-31. Commenting on this today is Catholic League president William Donohue:

“Florida Atlantic University has programs aimed at students who are Thai, Haitian, Chinese, African American, women, gays and Jews. This week it is featuring several events celebrating Caribbean artists. The school also lists faculty experts in such areas as Rastafari, multiculturalism,

sexism/racism in language and anti-Semitism. It has no expert in anti-Catholicism and no Catholic studies program analogous to its Holocaust and Judaic Studies program. But it hasn't forgotten about Catholics, which is why it is hosting a play that depicts Christ having sex with his twelve apostles. No doubt this is what they mean by diversity.

"The commitment that the school has made to various segments of the population suggests that it would not dare offend these groups by putting on a play that assaulted their sensibilities. But when it comes to Catholics, a different standard applies. This deserves an explanation. That is why I am writing to the school's president, Dr. Anthony James Catanese.

"There is another problem here. Florida Atlantic University is a state school, one that is supported, in part, by Catholics. There is little doubt that if Catholics requested that the school sponsor religious events during Holy Week, cries of separation of church and state would be heard. Yet the school has no problem using state funds to sponsor bigotry. I am writing to the Florida House Committee on Education Appropriations and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education about this matter: they need to know about this duplicity. Maybe they can ask some pertinent questions the next time school officials come looking for more funding."

BUSH INVITE TO IAN PAISLEY OFFENDS CATHOLICS

On Friday, March 16, President George W. Bush will hold a St.

Patrick's Day reception for Irish-American leaders. Among those invited is Ian Paisley, a Northern Ireland activist known mostly for his hatred of the Catholic Church.

Catholic League president William Donohue was invited to attend the reception but turned down the offer due to a scheduling conflict. Here is what he had to say about the Paisley invitation today:

"There is no bigger Catholic basher in all the world than Ian Paisley. And this is the guy deemed worthy of attending a St. Patrick's Day reception in the White House.

"We would have no problem with anyone from the Bush administration discussing the peace accords in Northern Ireland with Ian Paisley, useless though the exercise would be. But to invite this hate-monger to a reception that honors a Catholic saint is on the order of inviting Yasser Arafat to a Hanukkah party. It's insulting.

"It is not clear why this invitation was extended. After all, Paisley's only following in the U.S. is limited to the folks at Bob Jones University. Be that as it may, it is not just Irish Catholics who are offended by this move, it is Catholics of all ethnic stocks."

DOES TED TURNER'S APOLOGY COUNT?

The Catholic League has been notified that Ted Turner has apologized for his derogatory remark aimed at Catholics regarding the Ash Wednesday incident. William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, has read Turner's statement

and issued the following comment today:

"We at the Catholic League are admittedly torn by what has happened. On the one hand, our religion teaches us the virtue of forgiveness and the necessity of penance. On the other hand, we don't like being played for a fool. So let's put it this way: we'll bite our lip and drop the issue, skeptical though we are. But I am going to ask for a meeting with Ted Turner to see if I can find out what's bugging him. Maybe then we can really make some progress."

2000 ANNUAL REPORT ON ANTI-CATHOLICISM

The Catholic League's *2000 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* is now available.

The annual report lists incidents of anti-Catholicism that were brought to the league's attention in 2000. Entries from the following areas are listed: activist organizations; the arts; business and the workplace; education; government; the media; miscellaneous. It includes a preface by Catholic League president William Donohue and an executive summary by Robert P. Lockwood, director of research. The volume reprints a sample of offensive cartoons that appeared in 2000. Op-ed page ads from the *New York Times* that the league published during the year are also included.

Copies are now being sent to those on our media list, bishops, congressmen and senators, educators, Catholic colleges and universities, civil rights activists, major supporters of the Catholic League, and many others. Copies are available to the public for \$10.

William Donohue released the following statement on this subject today:

"The Catholic League's *2000 Annual Report on Anti-Catholicism* provides all the evidence needed to convince even the most skeptical person of the prevalence of Catholic bashing in America today. In one volume, readers can experience the depth and breath of this ancient form of bigotry. It is my hope that they will compare the findings in our work to the findings listed in similar documents prepared by other civil rights organizations.

"Because the most virulent strains of anti-Catholicism can be found in the quarters of the well educated, it would be foolish to conclude that education is the greatest antidote to bigotry. Indeed, if this were true, the most educated people in Europe would not have given us the Holocaust. This said, education is still a resource that can be used—along with other means—to combat intolerance. This volume can assist in that effort."