

# ANTI-CATHOLICISM CAMPUSES

## HITS

Many institutions of higher education have been particularly hostile to Catholicism. Just recently, the league addressed problems occurring at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, the University of New York at Stony Brook, Hofstra University and an off-campus newspaper at the University of Wisconsin.

The problem at Friends concerned the school's hosting an exhibition that featured anti-Catholic art. We objected to "Our Lady of Immaculate Martini" by Nancy Schwan; it shows a woman with a halo around her while indulging in a martini. Friends University was founded as a Quaker institution and is now known as a Christian school.

Stony Brook not only hosted the anti-Catholic play, *Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All for You*, it advertised the play in an unusually coarse and vulgar flyer. The president of the university, Shirley Strum Kenny, responded to a league complaint with the typical "we are committed to respecting diversity of opinion and expression in art and religious matters, just as we respect your right to disagree with the content of the ad and play." The president sent a copy of the league's letter of protest to the Theater Arts department for consideration, saying that she was "sorry" that we found the matter offensive.

Hofstra, a private Long Island university, released a student publication, *Nonsense*, that was not only virulently anti-Catholic, it even boasted of its animus. The editor-in-chief, Francis Rizzo, wrote that he was first attracted to writing for *Nonsense* because it was "Short, funny, and not too hard to understand. Oh, yeah, and slightly insulting to Catholics, too." After hearing from the league, the Director of Student Activities promised to discuss our concerns with Rizzo.

Finally, an off-campus newspaper at the University of Wisconsin, the *Onion*, drew a protest from the league for printing an extremely derogatory “satire” that was aimed at Pope John Paul II.

These incidents show that “diversity” is being used as an excuse to bash Catholics on campus. It also shows the cowardice of many administrators, hardly a new phenomenon.

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## **CHICAGO PROPOSES TO DELETE GOOD FRIDAY AS A HOLIDAY**

The city of Chicago is proposing that Good Friday be eliminated as a government holiday; the City Council is expected to vote on the measure. The move is unprecedented as Good Friday has always been given as a government holiday in Chicago. The official reason given for the change is “the increasing diversity of religious viewpoints among our work force.”

The league learned that a woman threatened a lawsuit if Good Friday wasn’t eliminated as a holiday. Citing fiscal reasons, Mayor Richard Daley said it would be cheaper to delete the holiday than to test the case in court. League president William Donohue told reporters that he doubts very seriously if Mayor Daley would cite budgetary reasons for not fighting a move to scratch Martin Luther King Day.

The official response that the league made to the media about this subject was as follows:

“The proposal to change Good Friday to a business day for city workers in Chicago has nothing to do with any purported

interest in respecting diversity. On the contrary, it has everything to do with bigotry. Respecting diversity means respecting the religious and cultural heritage of the various groups that comprise American society. The decision to delete Good Friday as a government holiday shows just the opposite—utter disrespect for the heritage of the majority of Americans.

“Just as everyone is not a Christian, everyone is also not an African American, yet that does not cause the high priests of multiculturalism to suggest that we eliminate Martin Luther King Day from holiday observances. In a time when holidays are literally being invented, such as Kwanzaa and U.S.A. Muslims Day, it is unconscionable that days like Good Friday are being stricken.

“If Catholics and Protestants allow this decision in Chicago to go uncontested, they will have willingly acceded to the demands of extremists. It is time to rally the troops and use every political, legal and economic means available. The Catholic League is presently exploring tactics of its own.”

The league sent a letter to all 50 members of the City Council asking that they not vote for this bill.

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## **OBSCENE “ART” AT PENN STATE TARGETS MARY**

In what is believed to be the most obscene piece of artwork to attack Catholics ever seen, a female student at Penn State crafted a huge vagina—in a grotto-like shape—complete with human hair, and placed a statue of Our Blessed Mother within it; it was displayed on the campus lawn in full view of the

students, faculty and administrators. Done as a project for an art class, it was removed by school officials after complaints from resident Catholics.

The student said that her “work” was a statement about oppression of women in the Catholic Church. The league sent a letter to the president of Penn State, Dr. Graham Spanier, asking what action, if any, has been taken against her. Specifically, we asked whether the student “has been required to attend a sensitivity training workshop on prejudice, especially as it bears on Catholics?” We also wanted to know “what the university’s customary response is to incidents of this kind when it affects other segments of the student population.”

Members who would like to write directly to the president can contact Dr. Spanier at Penn State University, University Park, PA 16802.

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## GREAT BOOKS LACKS GREATNESS

Great Books publishes a Junior Great Books series that is widely used in classrooms across the nation. Unfortunately, some of the selected readings denigrate Catholics.

The league made its concerns known by writing directly to the President of Great Books, Alice Letvin. Four selections from the series were cited as offensive: *I Just Kept on Smiling*, by Simon Burt; *End of the Game* by Julio Cortazar; *The Secret Lion* by Alberto Alvaro Rios; and *Day of the Butterfly* by Alice Munro.

While none of the four stories concentrates heavily on Catholicism, all of them contain either gratuitous remarks

about Catholics, or make references to unseemly Catholic characters.

The league is asking that those empowered to make selections about the series give due regard to our reservations and reevaluate their choices the next time.

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## CHRISTMAS TV “HUMOR” SLAMS CATHOLICISM

On December 14, two shows were aired that treated with disrespect Jesus, Mary and Joseph and generally caricatured Catholic beliefs and traditions. *Saturday Night Live* and *Mad TV* were replete with comedic attempts that disparaged Catholicism.

In *Saturday Night Live*, Rosie O'Donnell and Penny Marshall were portrayed as buffoon nuns. The nun played by Marshall was shown drinking liquor from a flask and in another skit, O'Donnell was shown speaking derisively of a nativity scene. In yet another scene, a figure of Baby Jesus was thrown to the ground.

*Mad TV* also caricatured the nativity scene with derision. Jesus was made the butt of laughter and a woman who played Our Blessed Mother announced, “The Virgin has arrived.” Mary spoke caustically of the Three Wise Men because the “cheap bastards” didn't bring any gifts. A figure of Baby Jesus was thrown to the ground.

William Donohue offered the following comment to the press:

“I know of no other religion which is treated with such utter

disrespect on TV than Catholicism. *Saturday Night Live* and *Mad TV* are just the latest contributors to this effort. By choosing the Christmas season to slam Catholicism, the actors, writers, directors and producers of these programs show their hand as clear as day.

“That no figure of parallel significance to Jesus from any other religion is ever treated this way is revealing. It is not because the producers fear backlash from other religions, it is because such insult would offend their own moral code; it is a code which does not include respect for Catholics.

“It would be a worthwhile exercise for those in the entertainment industry to hold a symposium explaining to the public the source of their animus against Catholicism. But given the unethical treatment they accord Catholics, it is not likely they could do so without lying.”

Donohue sent a letter to both shows expressing his outrage. Members can send letters to: **Mr. Lorne Michaels, Executive Producer, Saturday Night Live, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, Rm. 1719, New York, New York, 10112; and to Ms. Emily**

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## THE MYSTERIOUS MADALYN MURRAY O'HAIR

Until recently, Madalyn Murray O'Hair was known for one thing—America's most bitter atheist (she was the one who sued to get prayer thrown out of the schools in 1963). It now looks like she may also be known as a thief.

The last time any of O'Hair's friends saw her was in the fall of 1995 when she left to go to New York to protest the visit

by the pope. It also happens to be about the last time two of her atheist organizations remember seeing their coffers full as well.

United Secularists of America reports that \$612,000 has been missing since O'Hair vanished. American Atheists confesses that it has been missing \$15,500 since O'Hair disappeared. So where's the loot? If O'Hair has the \$627,500, it's a sure bet the cops won't find her in a homeless shelter, much less a church. Perhaps Las Vegas?

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## **FRANKLIN MINT CARICATURES NOT APPRECIATED**

The Catholic League has received many complaints from its members regarding a particular line of products offered by the Franklin Mint. We agree with our members that the "Holy Cats" and "Teddy Bear Treasure" series is not an amusing caricature of the nativity scene.

In a letter to the president of the Franklin Mint, Adam Berger, we said that "In both cases, animals are substituted for religious figures in a most trivial way. With regard to the latter, the nativity figures of Christ, Mary and Joseph and have replaced with bears."

We then conveyed our concern: "No doubt some find this caricature amusing, but it is also true that many practicing Catholics believe that this is taking liberties with their religion. Surely there must be some way to hawk your products without giving undue offense to the sensibilities of Catholics."

Finally, we said that it was not persuasive to argue that “no offense was intended.” We made it clear that “the effect of these products is to insult a large segment of the population.” We then asked the Franklin Mint to “discontinue this venture.” We are awaiting a response.