

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA SANTA CRUZ OFFENDS CATHOLICS

On May 31 and June 1, the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC) was host to the performance of a comic opera, "Sisters of the Visitation." The performance ended a month-long series of events celebrating the inauguration of the new chancellor of the school, Dr. M.R.C. Greenwood. The opera involved a reckless young man and his servant, both of whom sneak into a convent dressed as a priest and a nun in order to stop a young woman from receiving her final vows; the "priest" and the "nun" are involved in secret trysts.

According to a description provided by UCSC, the opera "is a hilarious comedy of errors as well as revelations about secret goings-on within the convent." Another description says it pokes "gentle fun at the formality of religious orders." The play was originally written at the time of the French Revolution and has been reconstructed by a faculty member.

On May 19, William Donohue wrote to Dr. Greenwood asking her to reschedule the opera "for a time during the academic year that is less prominent." She refused to do so saying that it was determined that the opera "would cause little or no discomfort," adding that "any anti-clerical humor would clearly be seen in its dated context." However, she did see to it that certain changes in the play were made. Not satisfied, Donohue issued the following comment to the press:

"Dr. Greenwood thinks that 'Sisters of the Visitation' is okay because the harm done to Catholics is minimal and the audience that will see it will be sufficiently urbane to see the 'anti-clerical humor' in its historical context. Then why not schedule a few outdated stabs at women of color, Jews, gays, Native Americans, Indonesians, Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans and Filipinos? I mention these groups because each of them was, or

will be, the subject of a reverential tribute during the inaugural ceremonies. Indeed, there has even been a memorial prayer and meditation for Jews. Dr. Greenwood's duplicity is evident to every fair-minded person."

When the league's statement hit the press in Santa Cruz, the media forced Dr. Greenwood to explain herself. The result was that the play was amended to remove the most offensive parts. "We have attenuated some of the anti-clericalism in the spoken dialogue," said Miriam Ellis, the stage director.

The league is pleased that some changes were made but still insists that the production should never have been launched. It speaks volumes about the university's commitment to multiculturalism that several other groups in society were treated with nothing but reverence while Catholics were held up to scorn.