

UNWORTHY OF OUR ATTENTION

It began with a phone call in November, from a public relations consultant for a “realist painter” whose work was to go on display in New York’s Forum Gallery on December 1.

It seemed that the agent was “concerned” about a painting entitled “Pieta,” featuring Mary as “a mulatto maiden in bondage (leather and rubber),” and a frontally-nude Jesus “partially wrapped in cellophane.” He wanted to “confidentially” provide the league with a press kit containing photos of the work, and get our take on it.

We looked it over and decided that it was a less than impressive work which did not merit the notoriety that our criticism would give it. Were it not for the title, we would not have recognized it as a depiction of Mary and Jesus, and even the bondage was not clearly decipherable. We chose to ignore it.

Then we began to get phone calls from *New York* magazine. They were doing a story on this art show, and, aware that we had (“confidentially”) received a press kit from the artist’s agent, wondered what we thought. When we dismissed the work as unworthy of a reaction from us, the reporter called again: If it stirred interest and controversy, would we then comment? And again: Did our “no comment” represent a “change in policy” for the league?

The answer is no. We often make the decision that a particular production, while perhaps offensive to Catholics, is of such poor quality that it will discredit itself without any help from us. And we will not be manipulated, by those who produce such works, into providing for them the kind of notoriety which they cannot attain for themselves.