

UVA STUDENT NEWSPAPER ASSAILS JESUS AND VIRGIN MARY

No sooner had the new school year begun than the Catholic League was drawn into a battle with the University of Virginia (UVA).

Catholic students on the campus contacted us about two anti-Christian cartoons that appeared in *The Cavalier Daily*, the student newspaper on campus. The August 23 edition showed a drawing of Jesus crucified on a mathematical graph with the inscription, "Christ on a Cartesian Coordinate Plane." On August 24, the newspaper ran a cartoon of Mary and Joseph, with Mary holding baby Jesus. "Mary...I don't mean to ruin this special moment," Joseph says, "but how did you get that bumpy rash?" To which Mary says, "I swear, it was Immaculately Transmitted."

We requested an apology, citing precedent: In November 2005, the newspaper apologized to homosexuals for publishing a cartoon that described a crane as the "gayest-looking of all birds." Michael Slaven, the editor-in-chief of the newspaper, replied to our request: "Under our newspaper's policies, satire of religion, or any other belief or creed, is acceptable."

Our response was predictably strong. Here is what we told the media: "When gays were offended at the University of Virginia for some throw-away line, *The Cavalier Daily* said it 'regrets printing this comic and deeply apologizes to those who were offended.' Yet when it comes to Christians, not even a shallow apology can be mustered. So it can be implied that the Mother of Jesus has a sexually transmitted disease—and that's okay with the editors—but making flip comments about homosexuals is unacceptable."

Kiera McCaffrey, the league's director of communications, was quoted in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* saying, "We're calling them out on it. They're mocking the crucified Jesus and there's an insinuation of a sexually transmitted disease."

The response that our news release garnered caught the student newspaper by surprise. Both *The Cavalier Daily* and *The Washington Post* admitted that the school was bombarded with 2,500 e-mails and 50 phone calls registering a protest. And, of course, Bill O'Reilly did a segment on this story without mentioning the Catholic League. That's why we call his show "The O'Shameless Factor."

On September 15, the two offensive comics were pulled from the website of the newspaper and a statement of regret was issued. We are satisfied with this ending.