

This column appeared in today's Boston Pilot:
<http://www.thebostonpilot.com/articleopinion.asp?ID=5366>

Conduct unbecoming a 'Catholic' college?

Dwight G. Duncan

The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester was slated to provide facilities for a conference on Oct. 24, organized by the Massachusetts Alliance on Teen Pregnancy. By the time this column appears, the conference either will or will not have taken place. If it does not, it will be because of the Worcester bishop's request to Father Michael McFarland, SJ, president of Holy Cross, "to revoke the college's agreement to rent space to the Massachusetts Teen Alliance."

Bishop Robert J. McManus issued his formal request on Oct. 10 because of complaints from people that are "shocked and outraged that a Catholic institution like Holy Cross would have anything to do" with workshops presented by members of Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, both of which "promote positions on artificial contraception and abortion that are contrary to the moral teachings of the Catholic Church."

The schedule includes a workshop run by someone from Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts to "learn the latest and greatest information on protection methods and how to engage the teen parents you work with in conversations about these options. The workshop will provide useful information about contraceptive methods..."

Another workshop is to be led by lawyer Jamie Sabino, who arranges for minor girls to get judicial consent for abortions without the consent or even knowledge of any parents: "Specifically addressed will be provision of contraceptives, parental consent and judicial bypass for abortion and questions regarding mandated reporting of underage sexual activity."

The Bishop of Worcester says it is his "pastoral and canonical responsibility to determine what institutions can properly call themselves 'Catholic.'" As a Catholic institution, "The College of the Holy Cross should recognize that any association with these groups can create the situation of offering scandal understood in its proper theological sense, i.e., an attitude or behavior which leads another to do evil."

What was the response of Father McFarland? On Oct. 18 he sent an e-mail to alumni and friends of Holy Cross saying that "Holy Cross regrets any confusion that in renting space, the college is supporting Planned Parenthood, NARAL or other agencies that promote practices contrary to Church teaching...Holy Cross fully affirms and promotes Catholic teaching on abortion and the sanctity of all human life...To cancel at this point would break a legal contract and would make it impossible for the alliance to hold a conference that we believe deals with a worthwhile subject. Teenage parents and teenagers at risk of becoming pregnant are among the most vulnerable people in our country today...I

respect the duty of Bishop McManus to uphold the teachings of the Church....However, it is the college's position that providing rented meeting space to a conference of professionals....does not represent a disregard of Catholic teaching."

So it seems that, unless he has a last-minute change of heart, Father McFarland will provide space for Planned Parenthood et al. They have a contract. It's about the money, then. But it's also about the principle: "We believe [the conference] deals with a worthwhile subject": stuff like artificial contraception for kids and minor girls getting abortions without their parents' knowing about it. It's also about sex, then. And it's ultimately about power. The Jesuit college is telling the bishop that he's wrong. Who's in charge here?

Funny. I thought that the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were all about distancing religious from the temptations of money, sex and power. Giving lip-service to the teaching of the Church (and the authority of the bishop), contrasts rather sharply with giving scandal in the proper theological sense of providing facilities to lead others into evil attitudes and behavior. In the words of then-Cardinal Ratzinger, "Can it be that, despite all our expressions of consternation in the face of evil and innocent suffering, we are all too prepared to trivialize the mystery of evil?" This trivialization of evil "salves our consciences and allows us to carry on as before." In the modern university, it's business as usual for the educational careerists and bureaucrats.

What would St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, say? We know what he did say: "If we wish to be sure that we are right in all things, we should always be ready to accept this principle: I will believe that the white that I see is black, if the hierarchical Church so defines it" (Rules for Thinking with the Church, n. 13).

And St. Ignatius' patron saint, the apostolic father St. Ignatius of Antioch, whose feast we celebrated last week, wrote insistently, "Let there be nothing among you that can divide you, but be unified with the bishop and with those who preside according to the model and teaching of incorruptibility." (Letter to the Magnesians, 6).

If Holy Cross persists in saying one thing and doing another, professing Catholicism but denying it in practice, then to hell with it.

Dwight Duncan is a professor at Southern New England School of Law. He holds degrees in both civil and canon law.

Email and AIM finally together. You've gotta check out free [AOL Mail!](#)