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Allowing "Monologues" . . .

Political Correctness Is Notre Dame's Real Religion

By CHARLES E. RICE

Fr. Jenkins, in his April 5 Closing Statement, delivered the name of Notre Dame to validate the *Vagina Monologues* (VM) movement, including the book of that name, and the Queer Film Festival (QFF) with the movement of which it is a part. He distorted the meaning of a Catholic university. And he did it all with persistent incoherence.

Fr. Jenkins ignored the substantive defects of QFF and gave it a license as long as it goes by its new name. That is like dealing with a soiled diaper by changing the pins. That validation of QFF may be more significant, but VM was the focus of his statement.

Fr. Jenkins fell for the lie that VM opposes violence against women. VM promotes that violence. First, the proceeds go to the YWCA, which informs pregnant women about abortion, in which about half of those murdered are women. Second, VM encourages such violence by objectifying women. The human person, as John Paul II put it, is a "unified totality" of body and soul. VM fragments that unity by personifying a body part and equating the woman to that part.

VM presents the vagina as an entity with which the woman should establish a "conscious relationship." VM includes such gems as, "If your vagina got dressed, what would it wear?" and "If your vagina could

talk, what would it say, in two words?" VM recounts the lesbian seduction of a 16-year-old by a 24-year-old, which the victim describes as "my . . . salvation." Another monologue consists of the repetition of a four-letter expletive describing a body part. Other monologists recount conversations with their vaginas or vulvas. Others describe lesbian sexual acts.

One monologue recounts a group masturbation, with the aid of hand mirrors, in a workshop run by "a woman who believes in vaginas." The decisive moment came when a participant thought, "I didn't have to find it. I had to be it. Be it. Be my clitoris. My vagina, my vagina, me." This morose equation of a woman with her body part facilitates the violence VM claims to oppose.

Fr. Jenkins would "suppress speech" only if it were "overt and insistent in its contempt for the values and sensibilities of this university, or of any of the diverse groups that form part of our community." Those, including Bishop John M. D'Arcy, who rightly see VM as a "contempt for [their] values and sensibilities," do not count, in the Jenkins world, as one of those "diverse groups." Bishops, incidentally, "should be seen not as external agents but as participants in the life of the Catholic

university" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Application, III).

The Jenkins January 23 address said, of an anti-Semitic play, "I do not believe that such a performance could be permitted at Notre Dame." He got that right: "Its anti-Semitic elements are clearly and outrageously opposed to the values of a Catholic university." But what about VM and QFF? The Jenkins statement says that "[VM's] portrayals of sexuality [are] in opposition to Catholic teaching." So VM should be banned, right? Guess again:

"It is essential," said Fr. Jenkins, "that we hear a full range of views. . . . But . . . we must . . . bring these . . . views into dialogue with the Catholic . . . tradition. This demands balance . . . and the inclusion of the Catholic perspective. . . . [T]his year's [VM] was brought into dialogue . . . through panels which . . . taught me . . . that the creative contextualization of a play like [VM] can bring certain perspectives on important issues into a constructive and fruitful dialogue with the Catholic tradition." Translating the jargon, his bottom line is, "I see no reason to prohibit [VM]."

So Fr. Jenkins, correctly, would bar the anti-Semitic play, even with a panel. Such a play is a lie. But so are VM and QFF. Fr. Jenkins would allow VM if it is followed by

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a panel including the Catholic "perspective" as a debatable alternative. The Catholic university "guarantees academic freedom . . . within the confines of the truth and the common good" (*Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, n. 12). That truth, a unity of faith and reason, includes the ennobling Catholic teaching on women and sexuality. It is objective and normative, not one of the "perspectives" that might be nonjudgmentally included in a panel at Michigan State.

Why do VM and QFF get an easy pass at Notre Dame? In our politically correct culture, it is open season on Catholic sexual morality. That teaching can be advanced only as one "perspective" without any serious claim to objective validity. Fr. Jenkins, playing that game, confirms that political correctness is the operative official religion of Notre Dame. His statement patronized faculty and students with a self-centered concept of freedom, divorced from any duty to objective truth. That concept corresponds to the "relativism" which, in Benedict XVI's words, "recognizes nothing as absolute and . . . leaves the I and its whims as the ultimate measure."

Incidentally, Fr. Jenkins' encouragement of *Loyal Daughters*, a proposed play of uncertain content, his creation of a diverse and predictably useless committee to discuss things, and his announcement of porous guidelines for events, all amount to a fig leaf to cover an accommodation to the relativist, homosexual culture.

President Brian J. Shanley, OP, got it right in banning VM at Providence College. "A Catholic college" said Fr. Shanley, "cannot sanction the performance of works of art that are inimical to the teaching of the Church in an area as important as female sexuality and the dignity of women." Fr. Jenkins should have borrowed the Shanley statement.

The Closing Statement is well named. It closes the effective phase of the Jenkins presidency. It involves no animosity or disrespect toward Fr. Jenkins to conclude, with regret, that he should resign or be removed.

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