4-1-2000

Letter to the Editor

Editorial Board

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Recommended Citation
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The rector was right. Francis X. Clooney, S.J., looking back on his experience teaching at a Jesuit high school in India, laments that his rector demonstrated intolerance of religious diversity by refusing to display images of the goddess Sarasvati with the same prominence as crucifixes ("Goddess in the Classroom: Is the Promotion of Religious Diversity a Dangerous Idea?" Conversations, no. 16 [Fall 1999]). Father Clooney goes on to advance a thesis in which Jesuit universities are called upon to promote actively other religions on campus with the same level of enthusiasm as Catholicism, including the campus-wide celebration of non-Catholic and even non-Christian holidays, under the premise that all religions have equal validity and authority and need to be given equal time and respect.

Although all people deserve equal respect, all ideas do not. I for one do not subscribe to the view that democracy and communism are equally valid forms of government, that the NAACP and the KKK represent equally valid opinions on race, or that evolution and creationism are equally valid explanations about the origins of life on earth. Although none of these contrary ideas should be banned or censored and they deserve active discussion, some are more worthy than others of active promotion. Religion is no exception.

If an individual does not believe in the primacy of his own religion over another, he should change his religion. If Catholic universities do not believe in the primacy of Catholicism over other religions, they should abandon their Catholic identity. I don't know what I would call a university that fully deployed the religious potpourri envisioned by Father Clooney. It might be Jesuit, but it wouldn't be Catholic.

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