



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on September 1, 2017

“Inclusive” Catholic School Removes Statue of Baby Jesus and Mary

Officials at a Catholic school in San Anselmo, California, have removed the majority of religious statues and icons — including one depicting Jesus and Mary — in an effort to be “inclusive.”

The San Domenico School, one of the state’s oldest Catholic educational institutions, was sanitized of most of its 180 religious statues and icons, after parents of prospective students supposedly expressed concerns over the relics.



“If you walk on the campus and the first thing you confront is three or four statues of St. Dominic or St. Francis, it could be alienating for that other religion, and we didn’t want to further that feeling,” explained Amy Skewes-Cox, chairwoman of the school’s board of trustees.

Cecily Stock, the school’s principal, pointed out that the majority of the nearly 700 K-12 students are not from Catholic families. “Over the last few years we’ve had fewer Catholic students as part of the community and a larger number of students of various faith traditions,” Stock said. “Right now about 80 percent of our families do not identify as Catholic.”

According to one San Domenico official, the over 150 statues and icons removed from the school were relocated to other parts of the property, or donated to “appreciative recipients.”

Kimberly Pinkson, the school’s marketing director, said that the “shift” is all part of a “strategic plan that was approved by our Board of Trustees and Dominican Sisters of San Rafael in June of 2016.” She added that the move “reflects our commitment to continuing a 167-year tradition of inclusive education.”

Such inclusivity at the expense of Catholic tradition does not sit well with some parents, however. “Articulating an inclusive foundation appears to mean letting go of San Domenico’s 167-year tradition as a Dominican Catholic school and being both afraid and ashamed to celebrate one’s heritage and beliefs,” wrote Shannon Fitzpatrick, whose eight-year-old son is a student at the school.

Fitzpatrick noted that “in our time here, the word ‘Catholic’ has been removed from the mission statement, sacraments were removed from the curriculum, the lower school curriculum was changed to world religions, the logo and colors were changed to be ‘less Catholic,’ and the uniform was changed to be less Catholic.”

Another parent, Cheryl Newell, with four children who have graduated from San Domenico, told the local *Marin Independent Journal*: “I am extremely disappointed in the school and the direction they’ve been going.... They’re trying to be something for everyone and they’re making no one happy.”

Kim Pipki, whose daughter attended the school two years ago, told the newspaper that some parents were particularly upset over the removal of the statue of Mary and baby Jesus. “People were shocked that the statues were pitched in the basement,” she said.



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Sister Maureen McInerney, prioress general of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael, which founded the school in 1850, deftly sidestepped the conflict, insisting, “I try not to get into the details of the operation. That really isn’t my place.”

She offered, however, that “if there has been a reduction in the number of statues but there are still many statues around the campus, I think that would be fine.”

In a statement that should be particularly troubling to committed Catholic Christians, McInerney noted while “San Domenico is a Catholic school, it also welcomes people of all faiths. It is making an effort to be inclusive of all faiths.”

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