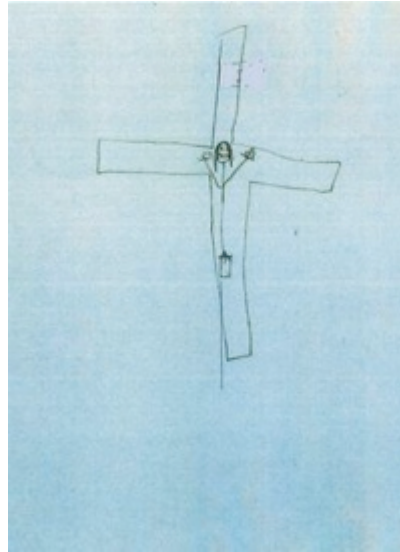




Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on December 15, 2009

## 8-Year-Old Suspended From School for Jesus Drawing

Taunton, Massachusetts, public school officials suspended a second grader for drawing a stick figure of Jesus on the cross after his teacher instructed the class to draw an image that reminded them of Christmas. The eight-year-old special needs boy was then required to undergo violence counseling before officials allowed him to return to school.



According to the [Taunton Gazette](#), the boy had just days earlier visited the local Catholic shrine National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette, and the image of the crucifix was fresh on his mind when the teacher gave the assignment. The Attleboro, Massachusetts [La Salette shrine](#) is a seasonal tourist attraction for many Boston-area Catholics, as it includes more than 300,000 Christmas lights as well as numerous crucifixes.

The image of the crucifix was deemed too violent in the current age of “no tolerance” for violence. Some have speculated that the teacher brought the drawing to the attention of administrators because he drew the letter X over the eyes of Jesus in the stick figure drawing. The incident happened on December 2, and the child was allowed to return to school December 7 after receiving counseling.

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“As far as I’m concerned, they’re violating his religion,” the incredulous father Chester Johnson told the [Taunton Gazette](#). He added that his son has never been in trouble at the school. “He’s never been suspended,” Johnson said of his son. “He’s 8 years old. They overreacted.”

Even the social worker consulted by the family in this case has protested this extreme reaction to a student’s drawing. “When I got that call, I was so appalled that I had to do something,” Toni Saunders, of the non-profit Associated Advocacy Center [told](#) the [Taunton Gazette](#). “They weren’t looking at the fact that this is an 8-year-old child with special needs,” she added. “They made him leave school, and they recommended that a psychiatrist do an evaluation.”

“I’m sure they expected Santa Claus or a reindeer, but that’s not where this child’s mind was,” Saunders [told](#) the [Boston Herald](#) of the child. And that’s just the problem with the public schools, not just in Taunton or the state of Massachusetts, but nationwide. They can’t teach about the most important things in life.

Some have argued that a crucifix was more appropriate for a Good Friday or Easter image than Christmas. But the purpose of the nativity was so that Christ could die on the cross and redeem the world from sin.

For Christians, Christ’s death on the cross and resurrection is not just an important part of most



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people's lives, it is not even the most important thing in the lives of Christians. Christ's actions on the cross, Christians believe, is the reason for life.

What does it say when an eight-year-old special needs student understands this, but the collective wisdom of the public school system — with their masters degrees and doctorates — does not?

**Thomas R. Eddlem** is a Taunton school teacher ... but he teaches in the Catholic school system.



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