

Fordham Faculty and Students Respond to Papal Controversy

By CASEY FELDMAN
News Editor

The Vatican has been making headlines recently because of Pope Benedict XVI's decision to revoke the excommunication of the Society of St. Pius X, a radical Catholic sect that counts among its members a known Holocaust denier. The Fordham community has reacted strongly to the news, with students and faculty alike calling for an explanation from the Vatican and statements from American bishops. Students and professors said that while they feel that Fordham does not have an obligation to respond to the Vatican's actions, they do hope that this controversy is used as a learning opportunity.

Richard Williamson, the bishop at the heart of the controversy, said that there is no 'historical evidence' to support the use of gas chambers during the Holocaust, according to the New York Times. It was also reported that the Pope has asked Williamson to "recant" his comments about the Holocaust, and that Cardinal Casper, who is in charge of interfaith dialogue at the Vatican, was not consulted on the decision to revoke the excommunication of the Society.

On Feb. 9, Williamson was dismissed from the Argentine seminary for which he worked.

Edward Bristow, professor of history, said, "I was disappointed by the Pope's reinstatement of the [the Society of St. Pius X] because I have no doubt that the Pope remains a friend of the Jews. His action was uncharacteristic of the Pope and the Catholic Church as a whole."

Peter Steinfels, professor of theology and the co-director of the Center for Religion and Culture at Fordham, agreed that the Pope is not an anti-Semite, but he questioned the Pope's motivations. "How did this come about? ... Was he not informed, or did he just not weigh in?" he asked.

Steinfels voiced his concern over the fact that the Pope said he hadn't known about Williamson's Holocaust denials.

"It's something that you wish there would be clarification of. Not just clarification of the question of Williamson and his kooky views,



LAURENCE KESTERSON/MCT

Pope Benedict XVI has been criticized for revoking the excommunication of a Holocaust denier.

but clarification of how the Vatican is proceeding. When Cardinal Casper... says he wasn't consulted on this... it raises questions. What are the procedures? What is the consultation?"

Bristow said, "This was not a passing matter on the part of Williamson, and this attitude in less extreme forms is widespread within [the Society of St. Pius X]."

Steinfels writes the bi-weekly Beliefs column on religion and ethics for the New York Times and wrote a column about the papal controversy. He wrote, "...One would expect that at least one of 433 active or retired Catholic bishops in the United States might have voiced some misgivings or raised some questions about Pope Benedict XVI's recent action" regarding the Society of St. Pius X, which Steinfels called "an ultra traditionalist schismatic group."

"Would somebody please say

something?" he said. "I would like to hear some American bishops say, 'Please give us some answers on this. You ought to know how much this is painful not just the Jewish community... but Catholics in general.'"

In trying to understand why none of the American bishops have spoken out, Steinfels said, "I don't claim to understand the culture of the American Catholic hierarchy, but they are just very reluctant to... voice any kind of public criticism of the papacy."

Steinfels also pointed out the fact that European Catholics have been more outspoken about their concerns with the Pope's actions.

Karina Hogan, assistant professor of theology, called the fact that the Vatican requested that Williamson revoke his statements on the Holocaust "an attempt at damage control."

She said, "Incorporating the

bishops of the Society of St. Pius X into the leadership of the Catholic Church calls into question the present Pope's commitment to the reforms of Vatican II, which that Society considers heretical."

Bristow said, "Since Vatican II, a doctrine that reversed 2000 years of Catholic teaching that the Jews were responsible for Jesus's death, there's been meaningful interfaith dialogue between Catholics and Jews."

Steinfels said that there was "concern" among the Fordham community about the Pope's decision, and that he has received much positive feedback in regard to his article.

He also said he hoped Fordham professors would discuss the controversy in classes and use it as a learning experience.

The Pope was scheduled to meet with American Jewish leaders on Feb. 11.

Community Rejects Fordham's Master Plan

MASTER PLAN FROM PAGE 1

flowing schools and the sale of property meant for educational purposes to private developers as grievances. "[Fordham's non-compliance with the desires of the community] is unacceptable," he said and called the plan as it stands "a slap in the face to the community."

Sidney Goldfischer, president of the Board of Managers at one of the member buildings of the FNU, the Alfred Condominium, located on 61st Street east of Amsterdam, said that Fordham initially presented the plan to locals at an open community board meeting in early 2005.

"[In 2005,] they basically said, 'This is the university's property, and we will build what we want, when we want and where we want.' It was not a discussion; it was a lecture." Goldfischer said that the community pressed to meet with McShane, but this request was not granted until February 2008. According to Goldfischer, McShane was very "gracious" at the meeting and listened to the concerns the community presented, but there was no follow-up conversation after that meeting.

CB7's resolution in response to the Jan. 21 vote included this same

complaint; it stated that after the 2005 meeting, the Board "alerted both Fordham and the Chair of the Planning Commission of a multitude of objections to the then proposed Master Plan... Despite [their] comments and innumerable meetings with Fordham, only cosmetic changes were made in the plan prior to its certification in November 2008."

Goldfischer cited architect Robert Moses's original plan for the school in 1956, which called for low buildings that would be linked with Lincoln Center "programmatically and aesthetically." He said that what Fordham is now proposing is "totally out of sync with that concept."

According to Helen Rosenthal, chairperson of CB7, the two biggest concerns that CB7 have are the size of the proposed buildings, including their "fortress-like" characteristics, and the fact that most of the buildings have not been fully designed as of yet. Rosenthal said that there are preliminary designs for "one or two" of the buildings, but the rest will not be solidified for years.

"We don't know whether or not these buildings will conform to the rest of the community or if they will be totally out of place," he said.

McShane argued against the



ALEX PALOMINO/THE OBSERVER

Fordham's expansion plan includes more public access to the gardens.

claim that the proposed plan will make FCLC "fortress-like."

He said, "There will be ongoing access to the gardens in the center of the campus, which we have always made available to the community, and there will be grand entrances to it, unlike the hidden entrances which we now have." He said that the proposed staircases leading up to the garden would make it more accessible than it currently is.

Prior to McShane's letter, Thomas Dunne, vice president for government relations and urban affairs at Fordham, released a statement that said that Fordham hopes to continue negotiations with city officials. Dunne said that the university is "hopeful that Fordham, the community and city officials will reach a resolution that satisfies the needs of the university and wider community."

Calendar

FRIDAY, FEB. 13

White Party

7 p.m. - 1 a.m.
Cafeteria Complex
Sponsored by CSA

Anti-Valentine's Day Party

7 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Location TBA
Sponsored by GO! Nicaragua

MONDAY, FEB. 16

V-Day: MMRP, UTVS, Vagina Prologues

11 a.m.
Lowenstein Lobby
Sponsored by ISIS

TUESDAY, FEB. 17

Samba Lesson

5:30 p.m.
Location TBA
Sponsored by SOL

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 18

Peers to Peers Information Sessions

2:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Location TBA
Sponsored by ISIS

THURSDAY, FEB. 19

Bone Marrow Registration Drive

5:30 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Plaza
Sponsored by APAC

What's In a Major?

11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Student Lounge
Sponsored by RHA

Healthy Relationships Advocacy

6 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Student Lounge
Sponsored by R.I.S.E

FRIDAY, FEB. 20

Bake Sale

9 p.m. - 1 a.m.
McMahon Lobby
Sponsored by GO!
New Orleans

MONDAY, FEB. 23

- FRIDAY FEB. 27

Mardi Gras Raffle

12 p.m. - 4 p.m.
Plaza
Sponsored by GO!
New Orleans

Crime

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28

At 4:20 p.m., an occupied elevator in McMahon Hall got stuck. Security responded, and the student was released after 15 minutes with no injuries. The elevator was put out of service.

A student left his silver iPod in the eighth floor lounge in McMahon Hall at midnight, and when he returned, the property was missing.

SATURDAY, JAN. 31

At 2 p.m., the smoke alarm in McMahon Hall went off. Security investigated and discovered the cause was a student burning wood for a physics project. There were no injuries and no damage.

SATURDAY, FEB. 8

At 6 a.m., a student reported that she was the victim of an attempted robbery at the 59th Street subway platform. The student stated that she was accosted by two males, who attempted to take her purse. She resisted and maintained control of her bag, but fell, injuring her knee. The two youths fled. The student was not seriously injured. She described her assailants as having dark skin, around 14 years old, one 6'0" tall and one 5'3", and both with a thin build. Anyone with information should contact the 20th Precinct detectives at (212) 580-6414.