

Incident Report regarding the UCF Catholic Campus Ministry

On Sunday, June 29, 2008 I attended a mass held by the Catholic Campus Ministry in the Cape Florida Ballroom at the UCF Student Union. I attended the meeting with my non-Catholic friend, Benjamin Collard, in order to teach him about our religion. Approximately forty-five minutes into the meeting, the organization began the communion ceremony, during which crackers and wine were distributed to the people in attendance.

I proceeded to the altar and received a cracker along with everyone else. I did not immediately eat the cracker because I wanted to show it to my friend Benjamin first. However, as I walked towards the woman with the wine, a member of the group grabbed my arm from behind. While I was being held from behind, another member of the group stepped in front of me, blocking my path. This group member said, "You need to eat it!" I was intimidated and embarrassed because I was in the front of room of almost 200 people. Although I did not want to eat the cracker, I put it in my mouth because I was physically and mentally forced to do so.

Upon returning to my seat, I removed the cracker from my mouth and held it in my hand. At this point, another member of the group, Michelle Ducker, put her hand on my shoulder and told me "Eat the cracker or I'm going to make a huge scene". Almost instantly, she grabbed my wrist and began scratching my fingers. While not exercising any physical force in return, I asked her to "Stop touching me". Despite my clear protest, she continued to hold my hands, wrists, and arms. She also touched my shorts in order to feel inside my pockets. I had to loudly ask her this three times before she stopped.

Although neither of us used or indicated that we would use physical force, a large man was sent to remove us from the room. When he asked us to leave, we promptly complied to avoid a conflict. In the hallway, I told him that I was insulted by their use of force. He informed me that their actions were in accordance with the policies of the Catholic Church.

I regularly attended a Catholic Church and Catechism throughout my entire childhood. In all that time, I never learned that failing to immediately consume my cracker during communion would oblige my fellow laymen to use physical force against me. This incident was especially perturbing because I have previously observed members of my church do this without provoking this apparently default repercussion.

In response to the incident described herein, I hereby accuse the registered student organization, Catholic Campus Ministry (CCM), of violating the following sections of the UCF Golden Rule 2007-2008 Rules of Conduct:

4. Personal Abuse

*b. Physical abuse or threat of physical abuse to any person. **

-In two instances, once near the altar and once while I was seated, members of Catholic Campus Ministry used physical force against me. Each of these actions constitutes physical abuse. Furthermore, the group member who obstructed my path while I was

being held from behind effectively threatened physical abuse. I was also concerned that the large man they sent to remove us from the room would initiate some type of physical abuse.

*c. Harassment: defined as behavior (including written or electronic communication such as AOL IM, ICQ, etc.) directed at a member of the University community which is intended to and would cause severe emotional distress, intimidation, or coercion to a reasonable person in the victim's position, or would place a reasonable person in the victim's position in fear of bodily injury or death. **

-The actions of Catholic Campus Ministry constitute harassment, as defined herein. Physical abuse is inherently distressing, intimidating, and coercive. These effects were unusually significant because the incident occurred in front of almost 200 people. Furthermore, Benjamin and I were constantly afraid that the situation would escalate, possibly resulting in bodily injury.

*d. Failure to respect the privacy of other individuals. **

-Privacy includes the right to refuse physical contact with another person. Michelle Ducker's failure to let go of my hands, wrists, and arms after I asked her to do so twice constitutes a violation of this rule. Furthermore, the method in which she touched my clothing to feel my pockets was highly intrusive.

* Although these instances of personal abuse can be attributed to individuals, the policies of the organization compelled them act in this manner. Therefore, Catholic Campus Ministry (CCM) should bear the penalties of the aforementioned violations.

7. Hazing

b. Brutality of a physical nature such as whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the elements; forced consumption of any food, liquid, liquor, drug, or other substances; or other forced elements; or other forced activity which could adversely affect the physical health or safety of the individual.

-The Catholic Campus Ministry maintains a policy of forced consumption regarding the communion crackers, which constitutes a violation of this rule. The consumption should be considered forced because when someone fails to consume their cracker, it is the organization's policy to immediately initiate the use of physical force. Alarmingly, this policy applies to newcomers as well as established members.

d. Any activity, as described above, upon which the initiation or admission into or affiliation with a University of Central Florida organization may be directly or indirectly conditioned, shall be presumed to be a "forced" activity, the willingness of an individual to participate in such an activity notwithstanding.

-I attempted to affiliate myself with the Catholic Campus Ministry. In the process of doing so, I was forced to consume a food item. This clearly constitutes a “forced” activity and therefore a violation of this rule.

11. Alcoholic Beverages Violation

Use, possession, sale and/or distribution of alcoholic beverages except as expressly permitted by the law and University rules, and behavior under the influence of alcoholic beverages.

-During the Catholic Campus Ministry’s communion ceremony, wine was offered to an entire group of students, the majority of whom are under twenty-one years of age. The wine was also given to a number of obvious minors. Serving alcohol to anyone under twenty-one years of age is against the law. Unless there is a provision in federal, state, or local law excluding religious organizations, their actions constitute a violation of this rule.

Webster F. Cook

William B. Collard