

Catholics outraged that Bible defaced as part of Glasgow art exhibit

GLASGOW, Scotland – Catholics furious with the Glasgow City Council for funding an art exhibition that encouraged people to deface the Bible have called for the removal of the offending work.

The exhibit at the Gallery of Modern Art by artist Jane Clarke, a minister at the Metropolitan Community Church in Glasgow, was modified July 28 to prevent the public from writing obscenities on the Bible. Clarke's original work sparked complaints and protests.

The untitled work, part of an exhibition called "Made in God's Image" that opened July 23, encouraged gallery visitors to write on the Bible.

The exhibit, funded by the city, initially consisted of an open Bible, a container of pens and the words: "If you feel you have been excluded from the Bible, please write your way back into it."

Gallery staff and the artist decided July 28 to move the religious text to a sealed glass case after it was brought to their attention that hateful obscenities had been repeatedly scrawled in the Bible on display. The public now can write on blank sheets of paper that can be inserted into the Bible by gallery staff.

The Glasgow Archdiocese has condemned the exhibition despite the modification.

"While the organizers of the exhibition have thankfully realized how offensive the incitement to scrawl obscenities on the Bible was, very serious questions remain to be answered about the purpose, cost and public benefit of this exhibition," spokesman Ronnie Convery said.

"It was surely unwise in the extreme to stage such an event which was bound to promote offensiveness while at the same time bizarrely suggesting the whole thing

was done in the name of promoting tolerance,” he said.

Dozens of Christians protested outside the gallery July 28 demanding the removal of the controversial installation.

One protest organizer, Letitia Reid, who is Catholic, said she felt she had to register her disapproval.

“Lots of people complain but they don’t often demonstrate, but I felt I had to,” she said. “It should be removed and the gallery should apologize to all Scottish Christians.

“I’m also very angry at the Glasgow City Council,” she said. “They shouldn’t be supporting this, let alone funding it. This is supposed to be a multicultural, multifaith city without discrimination, yet people are being encouraged to deface the sacred text of our faith.”

Fellow protester Philip Moran, also a Catholic, called the exhibit “an insult to God.” In a civilized society, he added, “beliefs should be treated with respect. Clearly we don’t live in a civilized society.”

Clarke said she did not intend to harm anyone with her work.

“It was never my intention to offend anyone, believers and nonbelievers alike,” she said. “I had hoped that people would show respect for the Bible, for Christianity and indeed for the Gallery of Modern Art. I am saddened that some people have chosen to write offensive messages.”