

Diocese condemns effigy of Obama on University of Kentucky campus

LEXINGTON, Ky. – Bishop Ronald W. Gainer of Lexington Oct. 30 joined with local community leaders in condemning the act of hanging in effigy the Democratic presidential nominee, Sen. Barack Obama, which occurred on the University of Kentucky campus Oct. 29.

“The reprehensible and cowardly action of the responsible individual or individuals went beyond the civilized limits of political speech or civil discourse to an offensive display of contempt for Sen. Obama as a candidate but more importantly as a human being,” said the bishop.

“No level of political or personal disagreement justifies such a lack of respect for another person’s God-given human dignity,” he said.

Bishop Gainer said he joined with Pope Benedict XVI “in saying that social, economic and political problems never justify racial contempt, intolerance and exclusion.”

The Courier-Journal daily newspaper reported that university police and Lexington police were investigating the incident. It said a professor riding his bike to campus spotted the effigy, sent an e-mail to the university’s president, Lee Todd, and called police, who removed it.

The paper quoted Todd as saying he was “personally offended and deeply embarrassed by this disgusting episode” and as head of the school felt “outraged and hurt.” He apologized to Sen. Obama and his family on behalf of the university.

According to The Courier-Journal, the effigy was outfitted with a mask that looked like Sen. Obama and had a rope around its neck. It was found hanging in a tree near a campus parking garage.

If an investigation finds that students were involved, Mr. Todd said, the university’s lawyers would determine what disciplinary action, if any, could be taken.