

Free Speech Takes on Sacriligious Meaning at Chicago Jesus Display

“The Divine Mercy” display, an image of Jesus that was set up in Chicago’s Daley Plaza by private citizens on April 17, was vandalized Tuesday night.

For the past eight years, private citizens have displayed an Easter cross and image of Jesus the Divine Mercy in Daley Plaza, expressing free speech and exercising freedom of religion in the public square. For the previous seven years, the display held its nine-day vigil without incident. This is the first time that someone has defaced the images.

“No display—whether religious, political, or artistic—should be destroyed by those who disagree with the message,” said Attorney Jocelyn Floyd of the Thomas More Society. “It is shameful that the image of Jesus Christ was marred last night, but private citizens should not allow the occurrence of vandalism to discourage them from expressing their faith in the public square.”

Free speech and expression of faith is protected by the First Amendment,” Floyd added. “Destruction of others’ speech is not.”

Several holes were found punctured through the bottom of the 10-foot tall canvas Wednesday morning, and the glass over four posters related to the image was shattered.

“It looks like someone took a bat to the glass,” said Jocelyn Floyd, attorney for the Thomas More Society.

According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Floyd said the display will stay up the full course of nine days as planned.