

Satanic Temple Re-Enacting 'Black Mass' Ritual at Harvard, Boston Catholics Outraged

A Harvard University student group plans to hold a re-enactment of a satanic ritual on the school's historic campus, drawing criticism from local Roman Catholic officials, who expressed "deep sadness and strong opposition" to the plan.

The Harvard Extension Cultural Studies Club said in a statement posted online that it plans to host "a historical re-enactment of a black mass ceremony that has a narrator providing historical context and background."

It said the event was intended to be educational and would be preceded by a lecture on the history and origins of the black mass, a ritual that parodies the Catholic mass, in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed.

The re-enactment will be performed by the Satanic Temple, a Satanist group that attracted attention earlier this year after it proposed the placement of a 7-foot () tall statue of Satan next to an existing Ten Commandments monument in Oklahoma.

"Our purpose is not to denigrate any religion or faith, which would be repugnant to our educational purposes, but instead to learn and experience the history of different cultural practices," the club said.

The Archdiocese of Boston has voiced sharp criticism of the planned re-enactment, calling on its faithful to pray for those involved and on Harvard to disassociate itself from the event.

"The Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Boston expresses its deep sadness and strong opposition to the plan to stage a 'black mass' on the campus of Harvard University in Cambridge," the Archdiocese said in a statement posted on Facebook.

It said the church was clear in its teachings about Satanic worship, and that such activity "separates people from God and the human community, it is contrary to charity and goodness, and it places participants dangerously close to destructive works of evil."

A spokesman for the Archdiocese, Terrence Donilon, added in an email on Friday: "In the strongest terms possible we reject any attack on the Eucharist," the ceremony in which bread and wine are consecrated and consumed.

The reservation-only event is scheduled for Monday night at the Queen's Head Pub at Harvard's Memorial Hall, according to a flyer provided by the student group on Friday.

A Harvard spokesman did not immediately respond to an email message seeking comment.

Editing by Scott Malone and Dan Grebler

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