

SRVUSD: GIVING IN TO “THE LAST TEMPTATION”

"In the first place, God made idiots. This was for practice. Then He made school boards." — Mark Twain

In May and June, a substantial number of SRVUSD’s best students and their parents petitioned SRVUSD’s ultra-liberal board of trustees to retain class ranking and weighting of certain advanced and honors grades not weighted by the U.C. system — or at least to put off contemplated changes for a year to allow the individuals most affected to gather reliable research on these important issues.

So naturally, the board thumbed its collective nose at the petitioners, relenting only on retroactive termination of weighted grades.

Now, thanks to revelations by a young student, comes word that Monte Vista English instructor Cal Tucker has been showing the rude, crude, and lewd film *The Last Temptation of Christ*, during Holy Week, and apparently without bothering even to seek permission from parents. It’s part of Tucker’s “Senior Literature and Composition” class — what, you couldn’t guess? Tucker gained previous notoriety with his showings of another R-rated abomination (the profanity, vulgarity, and violence-studded *Apocalypse Now*) and for being party to a 1988 CTA-backed lawsuit to enable the exhibition of R-rated materials in local schools.

Last Temptation is extraordinarily vile. Its commercial showing nearly 10 years ago provoked a riot in Athens, bomb threats in Columbus, and a slashed screen in Salt Lake. Petition drives in some U.S. locations fought local showings by pointing out that a sleazoid rendering of, say, Martin Luther King would never have been tolerated.

Last Temptation opens with a portrayal of Christ (Willem Dafoe) as a conflicted, wimpy carpenter who builds crosses and then helps Roman occupiers to crucify troublesome Jews. Judas (Harvey Keitel) arrives, and berates Jesus as a collaborator. (Throughout the movie, Judas is self-assured and strong; Jesus is weak, confused, neurotic, and considers himself a sinner, a liar, a hypocrite. His mother says “he’s not well in the head.”)...

Jesus joins a line of men waiting their turn at the house of Mary Magdalene (Barbara Hershey). Like the rest, Jesus watches as a nude Magdalene enthusiastically services one customer after another. After all the rest are gone, Jesus sits at

bedside, while the still-nude Magdalene says she hates him for having broken her heart. He asks her forgiveness for all he's done to hurt her....

John the Baptist is a long-haired old weirdo, attended at a muddy creek by quaking, wailing nudes and other strange types who all act like they're on drugs....

The "last temptation," it turns out, is a kind of dream sequence experienced by a naked Jesus as he dies on the cross. An "angel" appears to tell Christ he needn't die, since he's not the Messiah, and helps him off the cross. He soon marries Magdalene, is shown "making love" with her — but she dies, still bare-breasted for some reason, before their child is born. So Christ takes up with the two sisters, Mary and Martha, who've always had a crush on him anyway; he apparently has children by both.

Christ emerges from the dream/temptation when Judas rushes in to call him a traitor. He dies on the cross. The thoroughly despicable film finally ends, after 2 hours and 42 minutes of outrageous insult to Christ, Christianity, and Christians.

It used to be that educators, like physicians, followed a cardinal rule: First, do no harm. And it used to be that individuals who supplied pornographically blasphemous material to schoolchildren were called panderers, not teachers.

But all too predictably, neither Cal Tucker nor his administrators will face any consequences. The so-called site-council at Monte Vista has reportedly decided that *Last Temptation* is "educationally sound," and that it otherwise meets the district's curricular guidelines. So Tucker will merely be required to solicit parental permission in the future, and the school board will continue to subsidize a comprehensive assault on traditional values, from books like *The Boy Who Lost His Face* in K-6 libraries to films like *Last Temptation* in high schools.

After all, this board is CTA-backed. And it's the CTA which defies traditional values in its 1984 publication, *Guidelines for Academic Freedom in the Public Schools*: "Who dares take on religion, free enterprise, patriotism, and motherhood? We do — and we must!" (p. 32). Who opposes that twisted, depraved agenda? We do — and we must!