

KABBALAH KINDERGARTEN

Singer and actress Madonna has spent over \$21 million of her own money to establish the New York Kabbalah Grammar School for Children. The school, which is being called "The K School," will instruct primary-age children about the beliefs of Jewish mysticism. In addition, the pre-elementary school pupils will receive normal instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic — but, according to Madonna, "spirituality" will be at the center of every lesson.

The school is located a few blocks away from Madonna's Manhattan apartment and will begin classes in December.

Strict enrollment requirements face parents who want to enroll their 5-year-olds. First, parents must be practicing Kabbalists before even submitting an application. Next comes a formidable academic test for the child along with an investigation of the family. Tuition will be \$3,600 per term.

Kabbalah, which means "received tradition," is a blend of Jewish mysticism, magic, speculation, and superstition. It unites the elements of numerology and astrology to offer a theology for the nature of God, the origin of the universe, and the destiny of man.

Madonna became devoted to the mystical derivative of Judaism after becoming pregnant with her first child in 1997. Others from America's entertainment aristocracy, including Britney Spears, Demi Moore, Barbra Streisand, Roseanne Barr, Elizabeth Taylor, and Courtney Love have expressed interest in this form of mystical spirituality.

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EMMERICH HEADED FOR SAINTHOOD

The 19th-century passion mystic and visionary Anne Catherine Emmerich was beatified during a ceremony on Oct. 3. Last summer, Pope John Paul II sanctioned the official order for her beatification. According to Roman Catholic belief, beatification is the near-final step in the process that eventually leads to canonization. Canonization is the official declaration by the Roman Catholic Church that a person is a saint in heaven.

The renewed interest in Emmerich can be largely attributed to actor/director Mel Gibson and his motion picture *The Passion of the Christ*. Gibson used Emmerich's visions, found in her book *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, as a source for his film. During the wave of publicity before the release of Gibson's film last spring, sale of the Emmerich volume increased from 3,000 copies in 2002 to 17,000 copies last February alone.

In Catholicism, the road to sainthood is a long and difficult process. First, a person must die. Then the deceased's virtues and reputation, writings and public declarations are examined by the diocese in which the candidate died. Upon favorable review, along with the Pope's approval, the candidate receives the title of "Venerable." Emmerich received the title of "Venerable" in April 2001, thereby attaining a degree of heroic virtue and paving the way for her beatification. Following her beatification, confirmation of a miracle attributed to Emmerich will be the final requirement for her to achieve sainthood.

For more information on Emmerich and her passion mysticism, see the July-September 2004 issue of *The Quarterly Journal*.

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MORMONS CONTINUE TO BAPTIZE DECEASED JEWS

Nearly a decade ago, Jewish officials objected when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was posthumously proxy baptizing Jews. In 1995, the Mormon church said it was removing thousands of names from its International Genealogical Index and pledged that it would no longer baptize deceased Jews.

However, Mormons continued to submit names of deceased Jews — many of whom were Holocaust victims — to be baptized in the LDS temple ceremony. In December 2002, after seven years of continued proxy baptisms, the LDS renewed its promise at a meeting with Holocaust survivor Ernest Michel. Michel, current chairman of the World Gathering of (Jewish) Holocaust Survivors, said LDS church officials issued a memorandum pledging that Jewish names would be eliminated from the Mormon data base.

While this agreement was developed, LDS church Elder D. Todd Christofferson hinted at the difficulty of the

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