

AIR FORCE ACADEMY INSENSITIVE TO CHRISTIANS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the release of a report on the religious climate at the Air Force Academy:

“The report concludes that there is no ‘overt religious discrimination’ taking place at the Academy, but there are examples of ‘insensitivity.’ What is not being reported is the insensitive climate that has been created for practicing Christians.

“Comments from various ‘Focus Groups’ are revealing. The cadets said that ‘Reverse religious discrimination is rampant and evangelical Christians are under constant attack,’ even to the point of despair: ‘The Air Force I signed up for didn’t say I had to leave my religion at the door.’ Other cadets said the Academy is too ‘politically correct’ and that Christians cadets ‘are now being discriminated against.’ The AOCs (Air Officers Commanding) said that ‘the pendulum has swung too far and now open discussion is discouraged among cadets.’ And so on.

“Interestingly, ten years of cadet survey data on the subjects of race, gender, discrimination, reprisal, intercollegiate athletics and religion, show that ‘religion was consistently the first and second most positively rated climate area.’ So why all the fuss? Because some cadets put a flyer (as they do for many films) at the place setting in the dining facility advertising ‘The Passion of the Christ’? Or because ‘God Bless America’ was sung at an event? Or because a Protestant chaplain at a Protestant service asked Protestant cadets to chant, ‘This is our chapel and the Lord is our God’? All of these incidents are eminently defensible: What is not defensible are efforts to censor them.

“In my letter to the Air Force Academy, I will stress the need for members of minority religions to exhibit greater tolerance for Christians: minorities have rights, but not among them is the right to trump the rights of the majority. Moreover, I will ask that all cadets understand that freedom of speech includes religious speech. Finally, I will ask the Office of the Chaplain to report instances of anti-Christian bias to us.”