

ANTI-CATHOLICISM SPIKES IN CALIFORNIA

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the status of Catholicism in California:

Anti-Catholicism is sweeping California. Attacks on Catholic statues, public complaints about Catholics attending Mass, the selective enforcement of executive orders on religious gatherings, and politicians seeking to intimidate priests and bishops, are commonplace.

A mob of anti-Catholics celebrated the 4th of July by destroying a statue of St. Junípero Serra in Sacramento, the state's capitol. The statue was set on fire and smashed with sledgehammers. Though Serra did more to defend the rights of Indians in the 18th century against Spanish colonizers than all the protesters have ever done for American Indians today, Serra is a demon. That is why statues of him were previously destroyed in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

What's feeding this frenzy? Citing COVID-19 concerns, restrictive measures on religious gatherings have been mandated throughout the state. The tone has been set by politicians: There is one rule for people of faith and another for protesters. This has not been lost on the anti-Catholics. Protesters by the thousands, many of them violent, have been allowed to march in big cities across California—without a permit—as public health officials and politicians said nary a word.

According to the *New York Times*, 1,300 epidemiologists and health workers from across the nation recently signed a letter saying that those who protested stay-at-home orders were “rooted in white nationalism and run contrary to respect for Black Lives Matter.” But when it comes to the protesters, they

said, “we do not condemn these gatherings as risky for Covid-19 transmission. We support them as vital to the national public health.”

The mayor of Sacramento, Darrell Steinberg, shares the same position. He said in late May that he supported the Sacramento City Council’s refusal to impose a curfew after two nights of violence and looting. He contended that it would be useless to do so because “those who are perpetrating looting and violence would probably ignore the curfew anyway.” But in early April he said it may be permissible to have the police disperse church-goers if they assembled in prayer.

Meanwhile, public officials in San Francisco are now doing a headcount of Catholics attending Mass. The San Francisco city attorney, Dennis Herrera, says he has received complaints that more than 12 Catholics have been seen at a Mass. He sent a cease-and-desist letter to the Archdiocese of San Francisco ordering it to stop indoor religious services.

Herrera did not say whether he has done a headcount of Protestants going to church, Jews going to synagogues, or Muslims going to mosques. But we do know that his office is fielding complaints from the public that one Catholic church actually held six Masses in one day! Why Herrera did not send in a SWAT team remains a puzzle.

We know who is contacting Herrera’s office, and we know they are not public health fanatics. Moreover, we wouldn’t be surprised to learn that some of them were among the 1,300 doctors and health care workers who signed the letter giving the protesters a pass while condemning everyone else who refused to abide by their highly politicized directives.

Contact Herrera: cityattorney@sfcityatty.org