

# ARCHBISHOP DOLAN DEFENDS CATHOLIC LEAGUE

*New York Archbishop Timothy Dolan wrote the following article, published on his blog, following the barrage of criticism targeted at the Catholic League for protesting the ants-on-Jesus Smithsonian video. We are enormously grateful for his support.*

It almost seems to be an unspoken rule that Christians, and Catholics in particular, are not supposed to respond to criticism, insults, and slights towards their faith with anything more than a smile. Certainly we shouldn't actually say anything. For some reason, this is not expected of our other religious neighbors—Jews and Muslims—or of any other group, such as blacks or gays.

If you doubt this to be true just take a look at the reaction inspired by Catholic League president William Donohue's now widely covered statement on an exhibit at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C.

The exhibit, "Hide/Seek: Difference and Desire in American Portraiture," features a video that includes the image of ants crawling all over the body of Jesus on the cross. Dr. Donohue wrote a letter asking the members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committee to re-consider funding the Smithsonian; the federal government funds the Smithsonian Institution while exhibits are funded privately.

Dr. Donohue, for daring to articulate that this use of an image of the crucified Christ was offensive, was denounced as a "blowhard," "a self-appointed censor," "a right-wing fanatic," "a bully," "American Taliban" and one who "immediately and opportunistically seized" on the occasion for some kind of self-promotion, among other things.

Apparently, Catholics shouldn't take offense when our sacred objects are depicted disrespectfully in the name of art. And we certainly shouldn't let anyone know we are offended if we are.

Bill Donohue hardly needs me to defend him. He's well-able to do it himself, and has a lot of experience doing so. But, he's stood up for a lot of us before, and I am glad to express my

encouragement for the work he does. Some may take occasional issue with his style. Fair enough, and he's open to such criticism. Some might even discuss whether the image is offensive. However, no one should doubt the high value and necessity of his efforts, or dismiss him in crude terms. Even the recent high-volume critiques of his stand on this controversy exhibit nasty anti-catholic canards.

Keep at it, Bill! We need you!

Our duty to defend our faith is grounded in the true understanding of freedom: the ability to do what we ought to do, not simply what we want to do. Popular opinion may demand that Catholics suffer in silence, or more, embrace an insult as a work of art, but that doesn't mean that we should, no matter how many in public and private expect us to do so. That is why I appreciate Dr. Donohue and the work done by The Catholic League. I look forward to the day when the work done by the Catholic League is no longer necessary. Sadly, as recent events have proven once again, that day still seems far in the future.