

# ASSOCIATED PRESS RED FLAGS JUDGE'S CATHOLICISM

In a story on assisted suicide that ran nationwide on March 10, the Associated Press cited the religion of a federal judge who voted to uphold a Washington law barring doctors from engaging in assisted suicide. The judge in question is Judge John T. Noonan of the Ninth Circuit, and the sentence in question is the following: "Judge Noonan was an anti-abortion legal theoretician and Catholic scholar before his appointment to the bench by President Reagan in 1986."

Commenting on this is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"Why does AP think it important for the public to learn of a judge's religion if he is a Catholic? Does AP find it necessary to disclose the religion of all judges, or just Catholic ones? I do not remember seeing Jewish judges identified as such. I wonder why.

"I have written to the president and CEO of AP, Louis D. Boccardi, and to vice president and executive editor William E. Ahearn, asking for a copy of the AP policy on this matter. Assuming that the policy does not counsel a double standard, I have asked that steps be taken to discipline the reporter who red flagged Judge Noonan's religion. This kind of subtle, but nonetheless blatant, form of bigotry should never be tolerated in the profession of journalism.

"In the event AP policy allows reporters to designate the religion of public persons in stories that have little, if anything, to do with religion, then we would like to see recent examples of this practice. If there is no anti-Catholic bigotry to worry about, we expect full and immediate disclosure. We will be sure to share our findings with

interested parties in the media.”

The Catholic League is the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics-lay and clergy alike-to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.