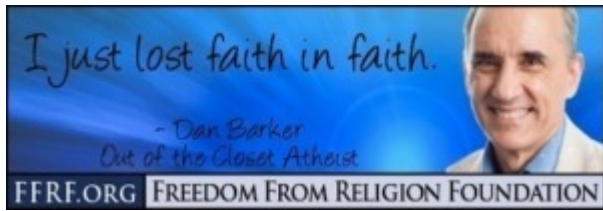


ATHEISTS SUE U.S. HOUSE CHAPLAIN



Bill Donohue comments on an atheist group suing the U.S. House chaplain:

Thursday, May 5, was America's annual National Day of Prayer. So of course the anti-prayer Freedom From Religion Foundation (FFRF) chose that day to sue the chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives. FFRF president Dan Barker is upset that House chaplain Father Patrick Conroy, a Jesuit priest, has declined to invite him to deliver a non-prayer "invocation" on the House floor. FFRF also named House Speaker Paul Ryan, along with several members of Father Conroy's staff, in the lawsuit.

Remarkably, Barker invokes his ordination as a Christian minister 41 years ago to justify his request—even though he later renounced God and proclaimed his atheism. Noting that House rules require guest chaplains to submit a valid ordination certificate, FFRF states that "Barker, who was a Christian minister for 19 years, retains a valid ordination, which he still uses to perform weddings." Really? Do those he marries know that he has renounced the Christian faith for which he was ordained? In short, do they know that the man is a fraud?

Fortunately, the House chaplain sees through this sham. It has been a long-standing requirement, Father Conroy explains, that any guest chaplain must be "ordained by a recognized body in the faith *in which he/she practices*" (My italics.) "This is a substantive requirement—not a mechanical or check-the-box requirement," Father Conroy wrote to Barker's Congressman. "For example, I do not invite member-recommended individuals who have obtained an Internet-generated ordination to serve as

guest chaplains, even if they hold deep and long-standing religious beliefs.”

All the more reason not to invite as a guest chaplain someone whose deep and long-standing beliefs are *anti*-religious. On a day in which President Obama reminded us of the need to “see God in everyone,” FFRF reminded us that they see God in no one.