

BILLY GRAHAM R.I.P.

When Rev. Billy Graham died on February 21, Bill Donohue released the following statement to the media:

"Growing up Catholic in New York in the 1950s, the Catholic we most identified with was Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, the first televangelist. The Protestant we most clearly revered was Rev. Billy Graham. In both cases, they had no rival.

"For Catholics, Graham was more than just the titular head of the Protestant community, he was a man who inspired us. He was a man of prayer, and his deep spirituality was contagious. Moreover, his ecumenical efforts were legion.

"When Graham was at his peak, our culture was Christian-friendly, allowing him to follow a decidedly pastoral approach. Those ministers who came after him were forced to take a more aggressive public stance, owing to the advent of the culture war.

"I have one fond remembrance of him. In the late 1990s, he contacted me about some cruel story that had circulated about him—it made him out to be an anti-Catholic bigot. The story was completely bogus. I appreciated how seriously he took this issue, and how quickly he responded.

"Rev. Billy Graham will be missed. I am happy that he is with our Lord."

Almost everyone applauded Rev. Graham. One notable exception was Niall O'Dowd from Irish Central, who branded him an anti-Catholic. Donohue labeled that accusation a smear, saying, "O'Dowd is a proud Irishman and an irresponsible critic of the Catholic Church."