

BLOOMBERG'S 9/11 GAG RULE INSULTS CATHOLICS

Leading up to the events surrounding the tenth anniversary of 9/11, there was plenty of controversy surrounding New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's handling of the clergy. Indeed, the mayor wouldn't allow them to speak at the memorial service.

In 2010, Mayor Bloomberg sought to justify his support for building a mosque near Ground Zero by recalling the bravery of the firefighters on that fateful day saying, "In rushing into those burning buildings, not one of them asked, 'What God do you pray to?'" He added, "We do not honor their lives by denying the very constitutional rights they died protecting."

If it was so convenient for Bloomberg to invoke the First Responders to justify his support for the mosque, what stopped him from honoring these brave policemen and firefighters on 9/11? Moreover, the first of the First Responders to die was Father Mychal Judge. He was not an anomaly: the vast majority of First Responders who died were Catholic. Yet both First Responders and the clergy were censored from the event. Thus, this was doubly insulting to Catholics.

The clergy gag rule was instituted to avoid "disagreements over which religious leaders participate." But since when has this been an issue? Plenty of clergy, including an imam, spoke at an interfaith service at Yankee Stadium after the attacks, and they managed to pull it off without a problem. What made this time so different?

The difference this time is the mayor. "This cannot be political," he intoned, yet it is the politicians—not the First Responders or the clergy—whom he invited to speak. Also, if President Obama was able to attend an interfaith prayer

service at Washington National Cathedral on the evening of 9/11, why couldn't Bloomberg allow a spot for a prayer?

Bloomberg said he didn't want to "take away from the solemnity, if that's the right word, of the occasion." Yes, that was the right word. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it means "having a religious character." Yet the mayor, perversely, wanted to secularize a solemn event.