

BURNING KORAN IS DEADLY WRONG

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on reports that a Florida pastor is planning to burn a copy of the Koran on 9/11:

Minister Terry Jones wants to show his anger at radical Muslims by burning a copy of the Koran on September 11. He is wrong morally, and he is literally endangering innocent lives.

The Koran is embraced by Muslims who are law-abiding men and women, as well as by terrorists. Jones knows this to be true, but somehow in his twisted understanding of Christianity, he thinks he has a right to insult and smear all Muslims. Furthermore, he is endangering innocent lives—including Americans—as Gen. David Petraeus has warned. Already, there are Muslims who have taken to the streets in Afghanistan and Indonesia.

While it would be wrong to sustain the “heckler’s veto” by giving in to those who seek to veto free speech by heckling, in this instance the “heckler’s veto” is moot: no one is in jeopardy of losing his free speech rights. What is being requested is a plea not to inflame passions needlessly by assaulting the sensibilities of Muslims worldwide.

In 1998, I criticized gay radicals who burned a copy of the Bible at Syracuse University to protest an appearance by Pat Buchanan. Now we have extremists on the right seeking to stoke the flames of bigotry against Muslims. It, too, must be criticized.

Minister Jones is more than a disgrace—he is engaged in agitprop and must be unequivocally condemned. There are plenty of legitimate ways to protest the wrongdoing that took place on September 11, 2001. Burning copies of the Koran is not one of them.