

# BUSH, McCain AND ANTI-CATHOLICISM

Yesterday, it was reported that callers in Michigan were issuing a "Catholic voter alert" in an attempt to brand Governor George W. Bush anti-Catholic. Governor Bush accused Senator John McCain of paying for the ad. A campaign spokesman for McCain, Howard Opinsky, then denied any involvement.

This led Catholic League president William Donohue to criticize the phone message and to defend Bush against charges of anti-Catholicism. Donohue was critical of the Texas governor, however, for wrongly attributing to McCain the phone calls and for speaking at Bob Jones University, the anti-Catholic school where Bush launched his South Carolina campaign.

Now Donohue comments on the latest development:

"While the phone message was technically an FYI to Michigan voters regarding Governor Bush's appearance at Bob Jones University, and his subsequent silence on the issue, the reality is that it was orchestrated right before the election to paint Bush as being anti-Catholic. Therefore, it was scurrilous: Bush is not anti-Catholic.

"Senator McCain has some explaining to do. First, one of his spokesmen denies any association with the phone calls, then McCain's campaign manager, Rick Davis, admits that the McCain camp was behind the ads. Senator McCain needs to make a public statement on this issue without delay.

"Charges that the co-chairman of the McCain campaign is anti-Christian have also surfaced. Bush owes it to all voters not to associate himself with those who are making this scurrilous charge; we await hearing from him on this matter.

“The Catholic League takes no side in this debate and owes no more allegiance to Bush and McCain than it does Gore and Bradley. But we do take sides in our battle against anti-Catholicism and will continue to address all the permutations this issue provides.”