CAMPAIGNING IN CHURCH

What do Protestants, Jews, Republicans and Democrats have in common that is not true of Catholics? Protestants and Jews allow Republicans and Democrats to campaign in their churches and synagogues. But Catholics do not. Here are just a few examples.

Both contenders for the New York Senate seat, Republican Rick Lazio and Democrat Hillary Clinton, recently spent time campaigning in synagogues in the Hamptons. And just about everyone takes his campaign to the Metropolitan A.M.E. Church in Harlem.

We decided to let the press know of our concerns:

"Rick Lazio and Hillary Clinton got a free pass from the press last weekend when they took their campaigns to some houses of worship. They got their free passes precisely because he campaigned in synagogues and she campaigned in a Protestant church. Had they whipped up the faithful by making highly partisan appeals in a Catholic church, the media would have gone ballistic.

"Imagine the following headline: 'Archbishop Edward M. Egan Invites New York Senatorial Candidates to Speak at 10:15 Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Sunday.' Now is there anyone in the press corps who wouldn't be screaming about the constitutional principle of separation of church and state? In fact, the double standard is worse than this: let Archbishop Egan—or any other priest—address a public policy issue from the pulpit and the next day the pundits go crazy.

"It's not hard to figure out what is going on: the name for it is bigotry. To be exact, the media do not want to offend African Americans (it is in their Protestant churches that these abuses typically occur), nor do they want to offend Jews. But Catholics? They're fair game. Now if anyone has a

plausible alternative explanation, I'd love to know what it is."

No sooner had we released this statement to the media than it was reported that Al Gore took his campaign to a Protestant church in Sag Harbor, Long Island. This one was an Episcopalian church dominated by white people. As usual, not one pundit complained.