

CATHOLIC LEAGUE BLASTS ASH WEDNESDAY INCIDENT AT SILVERGATE RETIREMENT RESIDENCE, FALLBROOK, CALIFORNIA

On Ash Wednesday, February 12, a supervisor at the Silvergate Retirement Residence in Fallbrook, California, told a subordinate, a practicing Catholic, to wipe the ashes from her forehead. She refused on the grounds of her religious beliefs. He then wiped the ashes from her face with a dirty dish cloth, allegedly having first seized her forearm.

William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, had this response:

“The Catholic League is appalled by the incident last Ash Wednesday in which a supervisor at the Silvergate Retirement Residence forcibly wiped the blessed ashes from the forehead of a Catholic subordinate. Press reports indicate that Silvergate’s management acknowledges that the incident took place but has expressed the belief that the incident has been blown out of proportion.

“No, it hasn’t. On Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, blessed ashes are placed on the foreheads of the faithful. The ashes remind Catholics of their own mortality and of the necessity for contrition and penance during the Lenten season.

“The supervisor’s insensitive actions and the casual response of Silvergate’s management betray anti-Catholic prejudice. It is as unacceptable for someone to wipe the ashes from the forehead of a Catholic as it would be for him to yank the yarmulke from the head of a Jew.

"The Catholic League insists that Silvergate discipline the supervisor. He should be required to attend a sensitivity training workshop on prejudice, especially as it bears on Catholics. Bigotry has no place on the job. Silvergate should also issue a formal, written apology to the employee, with assurances that the incident will not recur and that she will suffer no retribution for practicing her Faith."

Those on the West Coast can contact the San Diego Chapter of the Catholic League at (619) 585-7320.