

CATHOLIC LEAGUE DEFENDS BISHOP SERRATELLI

On October 23, Bill Donohue sent a letter to Lois G. Lerner at the Internal Revenue Service. The text of this letter is printed below:

Barry Lynn of Americans United for Separation of Church and State has made public his objections to Paterson, New Jersey Bishop Arthur J. Serratelli's recent letter to his constituents on the subject of abortion. Lynn has asked you to investigate this matter, charging that "It is impossible to interpret this passage [the concluding paragraph of Serratelli's missive] as anything but a command to vote against 'the present democratic candidate' because of his promise to sign a certain piece of legislation disfavored by the Catholic Church's hierarchy."

Perhaps it has something to do with the notoriously anti-Catholic origins of Lynn's organization, which once called for high-ranking members of the Catholic clergy to be stripped of their constitutional rights, that led him to conclude that any FYI statement made on the part of the Catholic clergy regarding public policy matters constitutes a "command" to Catholics on how to vote. Indeed, only someone who has bought into the worst stereotypes of the Catholic Church would assume that bishops are in the business of giving marching orders to their congregants.

Lynn is a member of the clergy of the United Church of Christ, a religion that supports abortion rights. Moreover, Reverend Lynn makes no bones about his rabid pro-abortion views. He is entitled to that position. But just as it would be absurd for me to say that he has no right to exercise his freedom of speech by telling his congregants that certain candidates for public office hold views that are very different from their

own on some issues, it is equally absurd for him to accuse Bishop Serratelli of crossing the line. In short, there is a profound difference between a passionately expressed opinion and a "command."