

Catholic League News Release

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is unalterably opposed to anti-Catholicism whenever and wherever it occurs. That is why it views with alarm the public statements of Dr. Joycelyn Elders, presidential nominee for Surgeon General.

When Dr. Elders was serving as Director of the Arkansas Department of Health, she made several statements that demonstrated an animus against the Catholic Church. To be specific, on January 18, 1992, Dr. Elders made an address to the Arkansas Coalition for Choice charging that the Catholic Church was "silent" and did "nothing" about slavery, the treatment of Native Americans, the Holocaust and the disenfranchisement of women.

Now such a statement smacks either of ignorance or malice. It is a rank distortion of history to say that the Catholic Church was "silent" or did "nothing" about past instances of societal injustice. Worse still, however, is Dr. Elders' demagogic characterization of the clergy and the Catholic Church's position on abortion.

At the 1992 pro-choice rally, Dr. Elders made the following statement:

"Look at who's fighting the prochoice movement – a celibate, male-dominated Church." More recently, on January 11, 1993, Dr. Elders referred to people who oppose abortion as "non-Christians with slave master mentalities." Both statements evince a disposition toward the Catholic Church, and to Catholics in general, that is inimical at best, and downright hostile at worst.

If Dr. Elders has legitimate differences with the teachings of the Catholic Church, she should say so in a professional manner. What we at the Catholic League find deeply troubling

is the cant and calumny associated with Dr. Elders' remarks.
There is simply no place for bigotry in public office.