

CATHOLIC LEAGUE TO OLYMPIC OFFICIALS: PRESS CHINA ON RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue discussed what he is doing about the Chinese government's decision to ban athletes from bringing Bibles to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games:

"I am writing today to the 15-member Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in Switzerland asking for an immediate investigation into allegations that the Communist Chinese government plans to violate the Olympic Charter by banning athletes from bringing Bibles to the 2008 Olympic Games.

"Principle #5 of the Fundamental Principles of Olympism in the Olympic Charter reads, 'Any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.' Under Chapter Two, Rule 23, Paragraph 1.6 of the Charter, the Executive Board of the IOC has the power to withdraw the right of the host city to organize the Olympic Games if the Charter is violated. However, Paragraph 3 says, 'Before applying any measure or sanction, the competent IOC body may issue a warning.' Accordingly, I am asking the IOC to do just that. If the warning fails, then the Catholic League will petition the IOC to deny China the 2008 Olympic Games.

"In addition to violating religious liberties, the Chinese government is guilty of gross hypocrisy. On the website of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, there are several comments lauding religious rights. For example, it says, 'China is a country with religious freedom and respects every religion.' It also posts a statement of October 17, 2007 titled, 'Beijing

Olympics Will Provide High-Level Service on Religion.' Moreover, just four days later—for the first time in its history—the Communist Party of China amended its Constitution to guarantee religious liberty. Indeed, Ye Xiaowen, China's Director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, boasted that the Beijing Olympics would respect religious liberties. Yet he is the same person who now says Bibles have been banned! But no matter, we won't let them get away with this."