

CATHOLICS TO eBay: TREAT US LIKE FAT PEOPLE

After a consecrated Host was recently auctioned online by eBay (it has since been sold, purportedly to a Knights of Columbus member who bought it out of respect), the Catholic League was deluged with complaints. The policy that eBay cited as a reason for not pulling the item was the subject of the following letter that Catholic League president William Donohue sent to the company today:

“As president of the nation’s largest Catholic civil rights organization, I was disturbed to learn that eBay would unnecessarily offend 63 million Catholics in the U.S., and 1.1 billion worldwide, by selling a consecrated Host online. To Catholics, the Eucharist is the center of our religion, worthy of the utmost reverence. While we don’t expect non-Catholics to maintain the same perspective, we do expect them to be respectful of our sentiments. That is why the decision not to withdraw this item is so disturbing.

“More than disturbing is the reasoning behind the decision. The Community Watch Team of eBay’s Trust & Safety division said that ‘even though these auctions may be offensive to some, please remember that most of the time the law does not prohibit these items.’ But the law has nothing to do with this issue: lots of things are legal and immoral at the same time. Moreover, we are told that eBay has decided not to prohibit any item ‘endowed with sacred properties by certain religious groups.’ Really? Since the policy is conditional, i.e., it refers only to ‘certain’ groups, it would be instructive to know which religious groups eBay would protect. Obviously, Catholics did not make the cut, so who did? And to say that eBay is ‘religiously neutral’ is disingenuous: all moral decisions are judgmental—none can be neutral.

“Last fall, eBay banned the book, *Why Is America So Fat?* Was that an example of your neutrality? Or maybe I’m missing something—was the book endowed with some sacred properties that eBay honors? In any event, the next time someone insults Catholics, please think of us as fat people.”