

CAUGHT IN A WHIRLWIND

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

William Donohue

This has certainly been a whirlwind. The pace has been lightening fast, and that's because we are getting pounded on all fronts. If it's not the Obama administration trying to strip us of our First Amendment rights, it's some jerk recording artist mocking our religion in front of millions. We live in sick times culturally, and in dangerous times politically. But there's another side to this story, and that's the incredible outpouring of support we've been receiving.

Here's one good example of how our side is reacting. In February, I went to Naples, Florida to speak at the 25th anniversary of Legatus, an organization of Catholic CEOs founded by Tom Monaghan; I also received the "Defender of the Faith Award." Over 600 Catholics from all across the country were there, as was Cardinal Raymond Burke, President George W. Bush, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal, and a host of other stellar personalities. EWTN's Raymond Arroyo did a fabulous job as the Master of Ceremonies, and Catholic League member Laura Sacha did an equally fabulous job organizing the event.

I was happy to discuss my new book, *Why Catholicism Matters: How Catholic Virtues Can Reshape Society in the 21st Century*; it will be published May 29 by a Doubleday imprint, Image. The book covers a wide range of topics, concentrating on the monumental contributions that the Catholic Church has made to civilization. Although the crowd was genuinely interested in what I had to say, many spoke to me before I took to the podium practically begging me to say something about the frontal assault on our religion coming from the Obama administration.

I did not disappoint them: they took to their feet to let me know how much they appreciated my remarks. Never have I seen our side as fired up as they are now. They've had it. Obama has unleashed a Catholic rebellion, and it isn't going to be quelled by his Johnny-come-lately "accommodation." Father Virgil Blum, who founded the Catholic League in 1973—he was a Jesuit Marquette University professor of political science—used to say that Catholics are eunuchs. He must be looking down at us now with a smile, as they have clearly rebooted.

It's not just Catholics who are angry. You would not believe the number of e-mails, phone calls and letters we have received from evangelicals, Jews, and Mormons, in particular. They know that the First Amendment is not divisible, and that they may very well be next. They also know that they can depend on the Catholic League to step forward if their religion comes under assault. At stake is more than Catholic rights—secular extremists are on the march, gunning for all religions.

Something happened, however, when I got to JFK that I would like to share with you. At first I thought it was just an anomaly—a bizarre and unfortunate experience. But after discussing what happened to me with many people in both Florida and New York, some of whom I hardly know, I'm less sure that it was a freak.

I was carrying a small suitcase (I could only stay one night) and a briefcase. Both went through the conveyer belt monitors without incident. Ditto for me when I walked through the detector. But then something strange happened: a TSA employee told me to step aside and stand before another detector, with my hands up. No bells or whistles went off. I asked if I could go and was told, no, I had to proceed to another detector. When I reached back to get my wallet (which was still on the conveyor belt), I was told not to move. After another round of screening, I asked if I could finally go. Then another TSA

official stepped forward, and the two of them escorted me to a room where they closed the door.

In the room, they told me they would be touching every part of my body. They did. One man even put his hands down the front of my pants. When they were done, I asked if I was "clean." They said yes. I told them that as an Air Force veteran I understood their need to obey orders, but I wanted an explanation. Why did they subject me to this? One of the employees asked if I was taking medication, and I told him that yes, I was on anti-gout medicine. So what? He said it is possible that the detector picked this up. But there was no saliva test. Moreover, I had the same medication in my body the next day when I left, and there was no problem.

Was this just happenstance? Maybe. But it could also be that I am on a list. Some say that all of this was meant to intimidate me, hoping that it would lead to an altercation. Wouldn't that be a story for the evening news?

I am not going to go into it right now, but trust me: I have been subjected to intimidation by powerful people who are in the tank for Obama. Indeed, it happened right after he was elected in November 2008.

Not to worry—I am not going to be intimidated by anyone. I have absolutely no intention of amending my ways or changing my style. I have one objective, and that is to fight for the rights of Catholics. No one is going to stop me.