

CELEBRITY CRUISES STIFFS CATHOLICS

Bill Donohue explains why the Catholic League is sharply critical of Celebrity Cruises:

Ten days before Christmas, we learned that Celebrity Cruises had just announced that beginning in 2010, it would no longer have priests on board to celebrate daily and Sunday Masses. We immediately followed up by questioning the cruise line about its new policy. Just this week we received a reply that said, "Out of respect for our guests of all religious faiths, Celebrity has chosen to align the religious services provided for Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Interdenominational faiths effective January 4, 2010." It added that religious services would be provided for "the major High Holy Holidays of each respective faith."

What this statement failed to note is the reason for the new policy. The following is an excerpt from the letter it sent to Catholic priests affected by the change in policy: "While we do meet the needs of many guests onboard by supplying a priest, we have recently encountered a great deal of negative feedback pertaining to the 'selective' support of one particular religion/faith. After many internal discussions, external research, and marketing investigations, Celebrity Cruises will only place Roman Catholic Priests on sailings that take place over the Easter and Christmas holiday."

In other words, because some anti-Catholics objected to daily Mass onboard the ship, Celebrity Cruises threw the priests—and the lay Catholic men and women with them—overboard. Instead of standing on principle and telling those generating the "negative feedback" that no one is forced to go to Mass, and that tolerance demands respect for religious freedom, officials at Celebrity Cruises decided to yield to the bigots.

The Catholic League advises all Catholics to shop around the next time they plan to take a cruise, but not to waste their time checking out Celebrity Cruises.

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