

# CHOICE OF ALITO CROSSES RELIGIOUS LINES

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on what it means to people of faith that President Bush has chosen Samuel Alito to be on the U.S. Supreme Court:

“Nothing brings people of faith together more than the culture wars, and that is why traditional Catholics, evangelical Protestants and Orthodox Jews are already coming together in support of Samuel Alito. Whatever theological differences they have pale in significance compared to their joint interest in religious liberty. Add to this the prospect of having someone on the high court who is sympathetic to the public role of religious expression, and the fight is joined at the hip.

“Already, People for the American Way is asking its members to contact their senators to oppose Alito; the petition mentions Alito’s rulings on religious liberty as a problem. Americans United for Separation of Church and State is also sounding the alarm, calling President Bush’s nominee ‘an acerbic opponent of church-state separation.’

“Unlike those who would erect an impenetrable wall between church and state, Alito is not hostile to every religious symbol that sits on government property. Nor does he share the enthusiasm that church-state fanatics have for censoring the rights of Christian students in the public schools. In short, it is precisely because Alito is a voice of moderation that the secular left is opposed to him.

“Some are already commenting that if Alito is confirmed he would be the fifth Catholic on the Supreme Court. For example, the Associated Press ran a story at 7:45 a.m.—before Bush formally announced his choice for the high court—with the

headline, 'Alito Would be the Fifth Catholic Justice on Supreme Court.' So what? Currently, Jews comprise 22 percent of the Justices, even though they are only 1 percent of the population. Is that a problem?

"The next time the 'Catholic' issue is raised, it would be wise to remember that both Sen. Kennedy and Sen. Santorum are Catholic."