

# CHRISTIANS PROVOKED IN ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS

Bill Donohue wrote to Patrick W. Hayes, Legal Director, City of Rockford, Illinois, on September 24. Here is an excerpt:

*I am aware that the Northern Illinois Women's Center has long been the subject of controversy in Rockford; the rights of pro-life demonstrators have allegedly been violated. That is an important issue, but that is not the reason why I am contacting you. My concern rests with the egregious provocation of Christians attendant to the enclosed graphic of Jesus Christ extending his middle finger; the inscription, "Even Jesus Hates You," appears below it. This graphic is currently being displayed in the window of the Center, in full view of adults and children; it has also been displayed, at various times, in the past.*

*This incendiary picture, designed to inflame Christian passions by assaulting their sensibilities and denigrating their religion—in a vile and obscene manner—constitutes such an infraction [of a city ordinance]. As such, I am requesting that you take appropriate action against the Center to put an end to such needless provocation. Thank you for your consideration.*

The next day, Donohue received a letter from Hayes saying that his office asked the owner of the Northern Illinois Women's Center to remove the offensive poster. Donohue thanked Hayes for his intervention, but also took issue with him about some other matters. Below is an excerpt of his letter:

*Your analogy between the poster in question and pictures of aborted children fails. The pictures are a representation of real life—they are not deliberately doctored. Nor are they a bigoted portrayal. Moreover, anti-war protesters regularly*

*show pictures of combatants and innocents killed in war, yet no one seeks to compare them to hate speech. By contrast, depicting Jesus Christ telling Christians "F- You" is not only contrived, it is an in-your-face obscene provocation, coming dangerously close to "fighting words" ("fighting words" are not given free speech protection by the U.S. Supreme Court).*

*You are factually incorrect to say that American newspapers carried the inoffensive pictures of Muhammad: not only did none of the mainstream newspapers reprint them, not a single network or cable television station carried them. Therefore, there is something bizarre, if not insulting, about your parallel sympathies for Christians and Muslims in these two very different situations: none of the cartoons came even close to showing Muhammad telling Muslims "F- You."*

After the poster was taken down, the building owner got testy and put up two more. Accordingly, Donohue wrote to Hayes again. The Rockford mayor then dispatched Hayes to confront the owner and got h