

CIRCUIT COURT HEARS NYC NATIVITY CASE

Oral arguments will be presented today in a case of national significance to Christians. At issue is whether it is legal to display Jewish and Muslim religious symbols in the New York City schools, but not Christian ones. For the past few years, New York City schools have allowed the menorah and the crescent and star, but not the nativity scene. The Catholic League secured a plaintiff to challenge this decision, and the Thomas More Law Center provided an attorney.

Last December, Judge Charles Sifton of the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of New York City's policy. He ruled that the menorah and crescent and star have a secular dimension while the nativity scene was "purely religious." This is the decision that is being appealed.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

"In his ruling last December, Judge Sifton said that holiday displays 'must be reviewed as perceived by the children, Christian children in particular, but not one hyper-sensitive Catholic child.' So if Catholics complain about discrimination, it must be due to their hyper-sensitivity. But what if the policy were reversed—what if menorahs and crescents and stars were censored but nativity scenes were allowed? Would the protesting Jews and Muslims be seen as hyper-sensitive by Judge Sifton?

"Even more curious is the position of the ADL. Last September, the ADL filed an amicus in this case on the side of keeping the menorah in the schools while banning nativity scenes. The crèche, it said, was an 'overly religious' symbol. It did not say what kind of meter it possesses to

measure such things, but we'd sure like to buy one.

"If the menorah were banned from the same schools that allowed the nativity scene, the Catholic League would be filing an amicus on the side of protesting Jews. That the ADL is once again working against Catholics is as revealing as it is disturbing. We won't forget it.

"In any event, when we look for our friends in the Jewish community, we look to people like Rabbi Daniel Lapin of Toward Tradition, and not the ADL."