

CLERGY BANNED FROM 9/11 NYC CEREMONY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the decision by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg to ban the clergy from speaking at the 9/11 ceremony next month:

After the Twin Towers were leveled on 9/11 ten years ago, two steel beams in the shape of a cross were found; they were subsequently moved to St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church. Last month, when it was announced that the World Trade Center cross was being moved to its new home at the 9/11 Memorial Museum, American Atheists sued on church-state grounds to stop it.

Almost everyone, including non-believers, were critical of this mean-spirited gambit by American Atheists. Among those who could not summon the courage to condemn it was Mayor Bloomberg; without criticizing these activists on moral grounds, he simply affirmed their constitutional right to sue. But when it comes to granting the clergy their constitutional right to freedom of speech on the tenth anniversary of 9/11, he does not equivocate: he simply elects to ban them.

The reason given for this grand act of censorship is spurious: Bloomberg's office says the focus should be on the families who lost their loved ones. According to this logic, when the clergy are invited to speak at public events, or to open ceremonies with an invocation, they are detracting—not adding—to the overall theme. There is little doubt that if the families were asked about the propriety of allowing the clergy to speak, most would gladly say yes.

Mayor Bloomberg should reverse his decision, allowing a priest, minister, rabbi and imam to make a short statement. This nation was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, thus the rationale for the presence of the first three clergymen; the inclusion of an imam—to the exclusion of the clergy of other religions—can be justified on the basis of a goodwill gesture to the Muslim community. Aside from kooks, is there

anyone who would object to this proposal?

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