

COUNTY OFFICIALS URGED TO ERECT CRECHES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on the Catholic League's latest Christmas campaign:

"Several weeks ago, we sent a booklet, [*Religious Expression at Christmastime*](#), to every county administrator in the nation; there are 3,100 of them. The booklet encourages these officials to erect a nativity scene on public property. 'There is no law which says you must do so,' we said, 'but it is also true that *there is no law which prohibits you from doing so.*' Indeed, we stressed that for the past ten years, the Catholic League has received a permit from the New York City Parks Department that allows us to put a crèche in Central Park.

"As we pointed out, in 1995, the Supreme Court ruled in *Capitol Square Review Board v. Pinette* that privately sponsored religious displays must be allowed on public property if other forms of expression are permitted in the same location. Our booklet is replete with guidelines on this issue that should prove to be helpful to county administrators.

"There is much ignorance in this area. For example, in Wellesley, Massachusetts, town officials tentatively approved a policy that allows religious groups to display holiday decorations. That's great, except that their idea of fairness is to put a Jewish religious symbol, namely the menorah, alongside such secular Christian symbols as a Christmas tree and wreaths. Equity demands that a crèche be put alongside a menorah.

"It's even worse in Lansing, Michigan. Town officials recently erected a state 'Holiday' tree there. Jerry Lawler,

executive director of the Michigan Capitol Committee, boasted that the 'Holiday' tree was meant to be inclusive. So he said it was okay by him to call it a 'Kwanzaa tree' or the 'Hanukkah tree' or the 'solstice tree.' In other words, he said it was okay to call it anything but what it is—a Christmas tree.

"The National Christmas Tree Lighting will take place on Thursday in D.C. We would like to hear from all those who might be offended, and why."

