

# CRÈCHES DESERVE EQUAL TREATMENT WITH MENORAHS

The Catholic League has been struck by the prevalence of menorahs on public property and the absence of crèches in the same places. Menorahs have been evident in public schools, in post offices, in train stations and in public parks, but there are noticeably few crèches. Christians are being told that they should be satisfied with the display of a Christmas tree. Furthermore, public school students are learning about the meaning of the menorah but not the crèche. Such inequity is inexcusable. Catholic League president William A. Donohue released the following remarks on this subject today:

“The Catholic League calls on every public authority who permitted the display of menorahs on public property to permit the display of crèches on the same property. We do not object to, indeed we support, the display of menorahs on public property. We only request that a double standard not be practiced by disallowing the display of crèches.

“The law on this subject is unambiguous. In Lynch v. Donnelly (1984), the Supreme Court allowed the display of a crèche on public property so long as the religious symbol was surrounded by secular symbols. This ruling was strengthened in Allegheny County v. ACLU, Greater Pittsburgh (1989). It was also decided in Allegheny County that the menorah was a religious symbol and the Christmas tree was not. Therefore, it will not do to say that the Christmas tree is the functional equivalent of a menorah.

“It is shameful that a change was made in the Postal Operations Manual (POM and Handbook P0-203 Revision) that allows the display of a menorah in a post office but forbids the display of a crèche (see 221.528 section c). This decision, which claims that a menorah is not a religious

symbol, is in flagrant contradiction with the ruling in Allegheny County. Accordingly, the Catholic League will assist a postal worker from Long Island, George Cornwall, in his Equal Opportunity Complaint of Discrimination.

“It is similarly disturbing to learn that public school students are learning about the meaning of the menorah but not the crèche. While the law bars the teaching of religion it does not bar teaching about religion, that is, it is perfectly legal to discuss the traditions, customs, social conventions and doctrinal beliefs of any religion. The Catholic League supports educating students about the religious meaning of the menorah and the religious meaning of the crèche.”

The Catholic League is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.