

DEMANDING RESPECT

William A. Donohue

The late comedian Rodney Dangerfield, was famous for his one-liner, "I don't get no respect." If many Catholics, and Protestants, feel the same way today—that we don't get the respect we're due—it may be time to look inwards and ask why.

Jews and Muslims get respect. Why? Because Jews, having been kicked around a lot throughout history, demand it. As for Muslims, they get respect because others fear them. Christians don't demand respect and no one fears them. So they get dumped on, especially at Christmastime.

The Catholic League, I am proud to say, is an exception. We get respect, and that's because we demand it and others fear us (but not for the same reasons that Muslims are feared). Ask Wal-Mart. When Wal-Mart senior vice president Julie Roehm was recently asked about the Catholic League boycott of 2005, she said: "We learned our lesson from last year that the majority of people wanted to hear us say Christmas, and we're saying Merry Christmas this year..."

It's too bad more Christians don't toughen up. Bernie Goldberg, a former CBS employee, is the author of *Bias*, an insider's account of the way many senior media executives think. He recently commented on Rosie O'Donnell's anti-Christian remark comparing Christian conservative activists to Muslim terrorists: "Given that the media, including management, are left of center in this country, they won't—they're not going to get too anxious about making a correction over something that offends the one group you can easily offend with no fear of repercussion, which is American Catholics." If she had ripped gays, Goldberg said, "she would have [had] to apologize. If it is about Catholics, don't hold your breath."

In September, the creators of "South Park," Matt Stone and Trey Parker, admitted that they can abuse Christians with impunity. Commenting on their cartoon which showed Jesus defecating on the president, Stone said, "we kind of agree with some of the people who've criticized our show because it really is open season on Jesus. You know, we can do whatever—we can do whatever we want to Jesus." In October, Parker confessed that fear of violence forces them to lay off Muslims, so "if the Catholics don't want us ripping on Jesus anymore, they should just threaten violence and they'll get their way." In other words, appeals to ethics don't matter to these guys—just the prospects of death.

The same fear mentality is prevalent in England. It was reported in October that "A number of BBC executives have reportedly admitted the organization is dominated by left-wing liberals who favor multiculturalism over Christianity." Indeed, they even said that they "would allow a Bible to be thrown in the garbage, but not the Koran for fear of offending Muslims." No wonder a veteran BBC official said his colleagues are now reluctantly conceding that "we may have gone too far in the direction of political correctness."

Now here's an example of how this plays out in real life. Two years ago, a lawyer for a synagogue in Wellesley, Massachusetts threatened to sue the town for refusing to display a menorah during Hanukkah. His threat succeeded and a menorah was erected. This year the town will display a menorah, crescent and Christmas tree, meaning that Jews and Muslims will get what they want and Christians will not. When a Catholic woman asked to have a nativity scene, it set off a furor: the local clergy was then polled about the issue. When this same Catholic said it was a conflict of interest to have a woman do the polling who was also the president of a local synagogue, she was sharply denounced by a local Jewish politician.

And what was the reaction of the Catholic and Protestant

clergy? A Catholic priest said his parish council understood that a crèche is more representative of Christmas, but “they wanted to be sensitive to the fact that there’s diversity within the Christian community.” Similarly, one Protestant minister said that while he prefers a crèche to a tree, “I do not favor making this an issue.” Another minister agreed, saying that a fight over religious symbols “does not respect the spirit of Christmas.”

In other words, Jews got what they wanted, and Christians got nothing, all because Jews made a stink and Christians walked away.

Respect has to be earned; it is not awarded. Moreover, respect for diversity should begin at home: Christians who tolerate disrespect for the kind of diversity that Christmas represents have sold out.

The Catholic League does not listen to those Christians who are too cowardly to act. Indeed, it is fair to say that the Catholic League is behaviorally Jewish: we fight for what we want.

Merry Christmas!