

# EROTICA CONVENTION DRAWS LEAGUE'S IRE

When the Catholic League issues a news release, it typically deals with some aspect of defamation or discrimination. But when we are called upon by the media to address an issue that, though not anti-Catholic, is a moral outrage, we don't turn down the opportunity to convey a Catholic message. This is what happened when the New York *Daily News* called William Donohue for his comments on an upcoming Erotica USA show at the Jacob Javits Convention Center in New York City.

Beginning April 15, the Javits Center will host Erotica USA, the purpose of which is "to provide tips and tools for lovers looking for a zestier brand of romance." The four day event, however, will be loaded with XXX-rated movies, bondage boutiques, sadomasochistic paraphernalia, masturbation workshops, a Fetish Village booth, and the like.

Donohue said he would object if this were happening at a private facility, but what makes this worse is that the Javits Center is a tax-exempt institution. The reason some organizations are tax-exempt, he said, is because they are providing a public service, and that is why churches, synagogues, mosques, charities, colleges and universities, foundations, hospitals, etc. are granted this status. Convention Centers which are given this status, Donohue argued, should not be hosting events which are against the public interest. That is why he objected to Erotica USA coming to the Javits Center.

On television, Donohue pointed out that at this convention, anyone can buy the tools and instruments of self-mutilation, provided that they are not smoking while making their purchase (the Javits Center prohibits smoking). He labeled the event "one big orgy bash" and said that if the convention center had

hosted a “smoke fest,” one where smoking clubs could gather to sample and rate different brands of cigarettes, no municipal official would allow it to take place in any state-run facility like the Javits Center.

Another point that Donohue made is that events like this are clearly associated with the spread of AIDS (he asked, where do the men go when they leave the convention and what do they do?). If Philip Morris can be held legally responsible for the lung cancer of a smoker, he added, then why can't the merchants at a sex carnival be held legally responsible for the diseases of its consumers?

The media loved this story: the Catholic League's position received international coverage. Mayor Rudolph Giuliani expressed his misgivings about the event as well; Governor George Pataki was not as outraged.