

EXTRAORDINARY CONFERENCE

PRESS

The New York *Daily News* dubbed it “an extraordinary joint appearance” and *Newsday* labeled it “an unlikely alliance.” The two dailies were referring to the joint press conference called by Norman Siegel of the New York Civil Liberties Union and Bill Donohue of the Catholic League.

On October 4, Siegel and Donohue hosted the media at the New York Catholic Center to denounce the anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism surrounding the Brooklyn Museum of Art controversy. Both men had clashed several times on radio and TV over the “Sensation” exhibit, but this time it was different: the legal and aesthetic merits of the display were intentionally ignored so that each could address the bigotry that was accompanying the debate.

Siegel and Donohue, though ideological adversaries, are friends, and both deplore the anti-Semitic calls aimed at Siegel and the anti-Catholic messages targeted at Donohue. At a previous panel discussion, Siegel had come to Donohue’s defense when an audience participant grew intolerant of Donohue; for his part, Donohue had interrupted the protest rally outside the Brooklyn Museum of Art to denounce an anti-Semite in the crowd, urging everyone to yell, “Go home.”

“The eyes of the nation are watching what we do here and how we handle this controversy,” said Siegel. “Let’s not get into the religious gutter,” he added. Donohue said of Siegel, “Disagree with Norm? I do. Respect him? I also do.”