

FLORIDA'S SUN-SENTINEL ALLOWS ANTI-CATHOLIC AD

On February 9, 1995, the *Sun-Sentinel* of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, published an incredibly anti-Catholic four-page ad. The ad, which listed an address and phone number but no sponsor, was placed by a group that falsely claims to be associated with the Seventh Day Adventists. The ad accused the Catholic Church of seeking to create a New World Order and portrayed the Pope as a Satanic force. The apocalyptic ad was replete with statements regarding "Earth's Final Warning," blaming the Catholic Church for ushering in the "Days of Darkness" and "Days of Peril."

Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League, made the following comments on the ad:

"We get lots of crackpot anti-Catholic material sent to us, so when I first saw the four-page ad, I didn't think too much of it. But then I realized that the ad did not appear in a fringe publication, rather it appeared in the *Sun-Sentinel*. That changed everything.

"When mainstream newspapers accept explicitly anti-Catholic ads, a line has been crossed. It will not do, as *Sun-Sentinel* vice president and director of marketing Jim Smith has done; to say that 'We respect the right of groups and individuals to buy paid ads to express their views.' Does Mr. Smith expect us to believe that he would accept ads from the Ku Klux Klan or American Nazi groups? Does he expect us to believe that no editorial value judgments would be made regarding an ad that portrayed other segments of the population in an invidious way?

"The Catholic League has often complained about bias in the media but we do not believe that most newspapers would accept

anti-Catholic ads. The *Sun-Sentinel* is in a class by itself.

"The Catholic League joins with the Diocese of Palm Beach in denouncing this ad. But we will do more: we will move quickly to establish a chapter in Fort Lauderdale; we will also pursue this matter further with local radio and television outlets. What we demand is an apology to Catholics and a pledge that no such ads will ever be accepted again. If this is not forthcoming, the Catholic League will launch a public ad campaign of its own, one that will directly target the *Sun-Sentinel*."

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.