

HARD ROCK HOTEL IN LAS VEGAS OFFENDS CATHOLICS

When the **Hard Rock Casino and Hotel** opened last March in Las Vegas, it featured a restored carved gothic altar in one of its cocktail bars, the Viva Las Vegas Lounge. The offensive use of the altar has been a source of criticism by many area Catholics, among them Bishop Daniel F. Walsh of the Diocese of Las Vegas.

As soon as the lounge opened, Bishop Walsh registered his concerns with Peter Morton, the owner of the **Hard Rock Casino and Hotel** chain. Morton assured the Bishop that plans were underway to remove the sacrilegious use of the altar. However, despite repeated promises that the altar would be removed, seven months later it is still standing, and that is why the Catholic League is now getting involved in the matter.

Catholic League president William Donohue outlined the League's strategy as follows:

"For seven months, Bishop Walsh has labored to get Peter Morton to remove the offensive use of the altar at the **Hard Rock Casino and Hotel** in Las Vegas. At every juncture, promises have been made to remove the altar and still nothing has been done. Indeed, the bartenders who work at the Viva Las Vegas Lounge in the **Hard Rock** establishment openly scoff at the idea that plans are underway to remove the sacrilegious use of the altar. Accordingly, the time has now come to put public pressure on Mr. Morton.

"The Catholic League will contact the media in Las Vegas about this incident, and will alert the national media to it as well. We will also take out ads in the local newspapers, as well as the diocesan newspaper, requesting Catholics not to patronize the **Hard Rock Casino and Hotel** and to organize

demonstrations in front of the establishment. We will also contact local Catholic organizations to organize phone trees and deliver their message straight to Mr. Morton. If more pressure is needed, we will bring it to bear, including a national boycott of all **Hard Rock Cafes.**"

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.