

# KERRY GETS THE JITTERS OVER RELIGION

On the front page of today's *Washington Post*, there is an article on John Kerry that maintains that he is not particularly comfortable talking about religion, save before black audiences. The article concludes by saying that his presidential campaign has no plans to give a high profile to the discussion of faith and values. Yet just two days ago, *USA Today* published an opinion piece by Gerald L. Zelizer that commended the Kerry campaign for taking a "first step" in addressing the role of religion and values by recently hiring a director of religious outreach.

Catholic League president William Donohue explains the league's reaction to the two pieces:

"After reading the Zelizer article in *USA Today*, I asked Joseph De Feo, the league's associate director of communications, to contact the Kerry campaign's director of religious outreach. We knew that after we exposed the radical resume of Kerry's initial director of religious outreach, Mara Vanderslice, that the campaign had silenced her. Not knowing who was in charge of this office, De Feo called seeking information about position papers, activities, etc. He was told that Vanderslice is still in charge, but was unavailable. He left a message asking her to call him back, which she has not.

"So what's going on? Yesterday, Kerry was quite felicitous quoting Scripture to African Americans at the NAACP convention. It is besides the point that he told the mostly Protestant gathering that the Protestant teaching on salvation—faith alone matters—is wrong (there must be deeds, he insisted), what is striking about this event is that it shows once again that Kerry likes to invoke 'God talk' in

front of blacks, but refuses to do so in front of whites. What is it about white people and the subject of religion that gives him the jitters, he does not say. No matter, Democratic consultant Amy Sullivan is right to charge that such an approach is 'not only a condescending strategy, but a foolish one.'

"Want to know what gives Kerry the jitters? Offending his heavily secularist, and often anti-religious, base of white contributors and supporters."