

League protests Russian religious freedom limits

In the wake of new restrictions on religious activities adopted by the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation, Catholic League president William Donohue has written a letter to the Russian delegation at the United Nations calling attention to League concerns about limitations on religious liberty in Russia.

"It is our belief," wrote Dr. Donohue, "and we believe it is the belief of President Yeltsin as well, that society is best served by not restricting the beliefs and practices of organized religion."

President Yeltsin has not yet signed the bill, which amends the 1990 Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, but final approval is expected. Under the new law, foreign religious organizations may only operate under the authority of a Russian religious organization and will be subject to state accreditation procedures. There are also provisions in the law prohibiting foreign religious organizations and non-Russians from engaging "in missionary-religious, publishing, or advertising-propaganda activity."

Dr. Donohue concluded his letter to the delegation by wishing President Yeltsin every success and expressing hope that "religious liberty takes root in Russia in a way that men and women the world over will come to admire."

Other Russian republics are also passing laws which curtail religious liberty. For example, the Russian Republic of Klamyk proclaimed in July there would be two state religions, Buddhism and Christianity. The Catholic League will continue to monitor the developing situation.