

MAYOR BLOOMBERG DISCOVERS RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's remarks yesterday endorsing the building of a mosque near Ground Zero:

Never have we heard Mayor Bloomberg more eloquent in his defense of religious liberty. Too bad it took the proposed building of a mosque at a spot where Islamic fanatics declared war on America to do so.

Regrettably, Mayor Bloomberg's record in dealing with issues affecting Catholics has not been so robust. Just last month, he was almost alone in his refusal to criticize Empire State Building owner Anthony Malkin's decision not to honor Mother Teresa on August 26; he simply said it was Malkin's call. Over the last few years, when the Catholic League and New York City Councilman Tony Avella sought to get his support for putting a nativity scene alongside a menorah in the public schools, he refused to cooperate.

In 2007, when an artist made a huge vulgar naked "Chocolate Jesus" and sought to place it in the street-level gallery of a midtown hotel during Holy Week, Bloomberg refused to criticize the artist; he merely advised not to draw attention to it. In 2005, when the Bronx Household of Faith, an inner-city Christian church, won a ruling in federal district court maintaining it had a right to hold religious services on Sundays in a New York City public school, the Bloomberg administration sued to block this exercise in religious liberty.

In 2002, when asked why he would join in an event that bars gays from having their own contingent (the St. Patrick's Day Parade), his office said, "The mayor believes the best way to

change an organization is to do so from within." Thus did he show his contempt for the religious-liberty prerogatives of the parade's organizers.

In other words, Bloomberg is not a sincere advocate of religious liberty: he just seems to discover it when it suits his interests.