

MIAMI CHURCH RUNS AFOUL OF IRS RULES

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on what happened yesterday in one Miami church:

"Yesterday, Bishop Victor T. Curry of Miami's New Birth Baptist Church welcomed Rev. Al Sharpton, who ran against Senator John Kerry for the Democratic nomination, and Terry McAuliffe, the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Jamie Malernee of the *Sun-Sentinel* reported that Curry 'made no apologies for turning his Sunday service into a political rally.' Rev. Sharpton, speaking from the pulpit, added to the politicized atmosphere by shouting, 'We're not people who are going to be beat twice.' But no one was more partisan than McAuliffe: 'Bush has misled us for four years and will not mislead us for the next four years. Get out to vote and we'll send Bush back to Texas.' Consequently, the Catholic League will now ask the IRS to revoke the tax-exempt status of this church.

"In another interesting turn of events, former President Bill Clinton spoke yesterday at New York's Riverside Church. 'Politics and political involvement dictated by faith is not the exclusive province of the right wing,' he said. This is a remarkable statement coming from a leader of the Democratic party. To be specific, John Kerry has said, 'I can't take my Catholic belief, my article of faith, and legislate it on a Protestant or a Jew or an atheist....' Thus does Kerry want to inoculate his religious views from his political positions. This is in sharp contrast to Bill Clinton's plea that one's politics should be *dictated* by one's faith.

"By contrast, Rev. George Rutler celebrated a Mass yesterday in New York that was well attended by Catholics in town for the convention. In a lengthy sermon, which focused on

humility and the poor, Rutler made a passing reference to the controversy over Catholic pro-abortion politicians, saying that 'No one has a right to take Communion.' Yet this was enough for an AP reporter to say that 'church-state separation watchdogs' have said that 'Masses such as the one held Sunday amount to a tacit political endorsement.'

"Neither Clinton nor Rutler violated the IRS rules governing church and state. But McAuliffe crossed the line, hence the need to contact the IRS."