

MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET

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The Catholic League has moved to 450 Seventh Avenue, right across the street from Macy's and up the block from Madison Square Garden and Penn Station. We occupy the entire 34th floor on the corner of 34th Street and Seventh Avenue. Why the move?

We've moved because we've run out of room at the Catholic Center of the Archdiocese of New York. In the mid-1990s, Cardinal O'Connor was kind enough to give us a portion of his own suite, just to keep us in the building. But this time there's no such option. With no room left in the inn, we decided to move.

The move was necessitated because of the increasing volume of work, the need to hire more staff and the extremely tight quarters we've been living in for some time. We need room for a library, audio-video equipment, mail, storage, computers, personnel etc. In other words, it's a matter of supply and demand: demands on the Catholic League are growing and we need a new supply of space to keep pace.

More and more, the media are turning to the Catholic League to comment on contemporary moral issues, many of which are laced with anti-Catholic overtones. We have been in a culture war for some time and it shows no signs of abating. Our goal is to meet this war head-on, making sure the voice the Catholic Church is heard above the roar.

The historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, in her book *One Nation, Two Cultures*, talks about the importance of a "dissident culture" in our society. The "dissident culture" embraces traditional values. As such, it directly confronts the values associated with the dominant culture, e.g., radical individualism. Many of the examples that Himmelfarb lists as emanating from the

“dissident culture” (e.g., the protest over the play “Corpus Christi”) are actually the work of the Catholic League.

Most Catholic League members probably don’t think of themselves as being part of the “dissident culture.” But they are. Indeed, those of us who believe that our society needs a moral nucleus, grounded in the precepts of the Judeo-Christian ethos, are very much outsiders in our society today. We are dissidents rebelling against a cultural strain that sees religion as the enemy of liberty.

The Catholic League, of course, is not alone in pushing for a restoration of civility and community, but we are playing an increasingly larger role. We are doing this not as a direct result of our work, but rather as an ancillary effect of our effort. To put it differently, our job is the defense of the Church—to make sure her voice is heard—and by doing so we necessarily promote the voice of restraint. Any sober person must agree that this is a voice that needs to be ascendant once again.

There are many encouraging signs that things are turning around in our culture. Anyone who reads *Catalyst* can see the number of victories we’ve scored and the number of media outlets that we reach. To be sure, we have a long way to go, but it is undeniably true that we are having an effect. Indeed, I literally couldn’t get out of bed in the morning if I didn’t believe this to be true.

Catholic League members also know that the league is composed of gladiators, not spectators. We never wait to see which way the wind is blowing before we act. That’s what losers do—they poll “focus groups” to find out what they should be doing. Then they watch from the sidelines to see how the gladiators are doing before committing themselves. By that time it’s too late.

Being gladiators, we are impatient with our allies who say we

need to get together so we can “brainstorm.” The problem here is that too often it’s a prescription for paralysis; nothing ever seems to come of the “brainstorming.” It is important not to let the means become an end.

We know our members are gladiators, too. For example, when we put the names and addresses of offending advertisers, actors, producers, college presidents, et al. in *Catalyst*, we know you’ll join the fight. As a matter of fact, you respond so well that I often promise an apologetic offender that I won’t print his name and address in *Catalyst* for fear that the poor devil will be pulverized.

And so the fight goes on. Instead of operating out of 55th Street and First Avenue on the east side of Manhattan, we’ve moved west to 34th and Seventh. Now that we have more room to work out in, I expect we’ll be in better shape than ever before.

We’ll need to be. The culture war is boiling over and the Catholic League is being called upon with greater frequency to send its gladiators into battle. If we win, not only does the Church prosper, the “dissident culture” stands a chance of recapturing the dominant culture. And if we do win, they’ll all say that we really are the Miracle on 34th Street.