

# MSGR. WOOLSEY DEFENDS HIMSELF

Monsignor John Woolsey, pastor of St. John the Martyr in Manhattan, addressed the faithful after today's 12:15 p.m. Mass. He read from a prepared statement. Some of those who listened to his remarks were interviewed by the media outside the church, including Catholic League president William Donohue. Donohue offered the following observations when he returned to the office:

"It is not only preposterous to believe that Msgr. Woolsey would squeeze an elderly woman for money, it is patently obscene for anyone to make such an allegation. I have known him for over a decade, and if he were the conniving type, I would have known it by now. So would those who have worked with him, to say nothing of his parishioners.

"It's about time the media started questioning Msgr. Woolsey's accuser, including her lawyers. For starters, they can ask attorney Brian Caplan, who represents the estate of Rose Cale, why he made the following comment in a July 12 press release: 'Given the trusted and confidential relationship which exists between these [spiritual] leaders and their followers, the law presumes that any gift procured by such a leader is obtained through improper means.' Caplan adds that religious leaders have a 'moral and ethical obligation' not to accept 'significant gifts.' And he has a professional obligation to stop talking like a philosopher and start making accusations—if he can make them—about any alleged legal impropriety. His inability to do so is revealing.

"Caplan knows very well that gifts, by definition, are not 'procured'—they are given. He must also know that it is common practice for priests, ministers and rabbis to receive

gifts from their congregants. Furthermore, no one but the most pure would ever object. More important, that is exactly what happened here: Msgr. Woolsey received gifts from Rose Cale that she voluntarily gave. So what? And as he said in his statement, 'Every nickel that she ever gave to St. John's has been used for the parish's benefit, not mine.'

"Msgr. Woolsey is innocent. When he wins, we plan to give him a gift. And just to drive Caplan nuts, we'll make sure it's beyond 'significant.'"