

# MUSLIMS CAN PRAY IN NEW YORK CITY SCHOOLS: PARITY FOR CHRISTIANS AND JEWS URGED

New York City Schools Chancellor Harold Levy is allowing Muslim students to pray in school during Ramadan; areas will be set aside for group prayer by school officials. Permission is granted provided that the prayers do not disrupt classes or interfere with the rights of other students (e.g., non-Muslim students cannot be denied access to the same area set aside for prayer). Muslim students can also have their schedules altered so they won't miss any classes.

Muslim students are expected to pray at noon and at four other times during the day as part of their Ramadan observances. Ramadan starts at sundown tomorrow.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"The Catholic League commends Schools Chancellor Harold Levy for his decision accommodating the religious rights of Muslims. We have long argued that there is a fundamental difference between state sponsorship of religion and state accommodation of religion; the former is properly unconstitutional while the latter is properly constitutional. The state has no business formally endorsing any religious activity, but it also has no business interfering with voluntary exercises of religion that do not infringe upon the rights of others. That is why this new policy is welcome.

"In the spirit of inclusiveness, the Catholic League is requesting Schools Chancellor Harold Levy to extend his policy of tolerance to Christians and Jews. Hanukkah and Christmas will be here soon. It is only fitting that the New York City public schools extend to Jews and Christians the same respect

for their religious traditions and observances that they now extend to Muslims. This is what diversity really means—giving equal recognition to the diverse cultural and religious heritages that constitute the American mosaic. We expect our plea for parity will be granted.”