

NATIVITY SCENES REQUESTED IN NYC PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Catholic League president William Donohue has written to New York City Schools Chancellor Dr. Harold Levy asking him to allow the placement of nativity scenes in the New York City schools. He has also asked him what disciplinary measures will be taken against Dr. Fran Levy, principal of PS 22, for discriminating against Christians.

The following statement has been issued by William Donohue:

“Regarding a request by the Catholic League to place nativity scenes in the public schools, Dr. Harold Levy said yesterday that ‘The Supreme Court has previously refused to permit erection of a nativity scene on public property.’ This is inaccurate. There is no such decision. On two occasions in the 1980s, the high court said that religious symbols could be displayed on public property if they are accompanied by secular symbols. Furthermore, in 1995, the Supreme Court held that the Klan could place an unattended cross on the grounds of the state capitol in Ohio because it was purely a matter of free speech covered by the First Amendment. And consider this: on December 19, the Catholic League will erect a nativity scene in Central Park (as it has for years) without legal contention. We have secured a permit from the Parks Department that is entirely legal. Indeed, in just a matter of days the world’s largest menorah will be displayed in Central Park.

“Right now menorahs and crescents and stars (religious symbols of Judaism and Islam) are allowed in the public schools precisely because they are surrounded by a Christian secular symbol, namely the Christmas tree. Now imagine the uproar if New York City schools banned the menorah and crescent and star and allowed a nativity scene next to a dreidel!

“On the matter of Dr. Levy, she ordered a Christmas tree taken down last Thursday and then invited Jewish and Muslim teachers to bring *religious* symbols to work. Bowing to public pressure, she has reversed her decision. Nonetheless, we want to know what is going to be done about her decision to exclude Christians.”