NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM DISCRIMINATES AGAINST CHRISTIANS

The Catholic League is charging the New York City school system with discrimination against Christians. It plans to sue New York once a family with children in the New York City public schools agrees to be party to the suit; this is a requirement for the league to achieve standing. Working cooperatively with the Catholic League in this effort is the Thomas More Center for Law & Justice, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"On November 29, Dr. Fran Levy, principal of PS 22 in Flushing, ordered a Christmas tree taken down and then on the very next day she invited Jewish and Muslim teachers to bring religious symbols to school. When we protested, Dr. Levy reversed herself on both counts. But in the course of our complaint, we learned that on November 28, Chad Vignola, general counsel to the chancellor, released a memo to all superintendents and principals declaring all secular holiday symbols to be permissible in the schools. This was unexceptional save that Vignola listed as examples 'Christmas trees, Menorahs, and the Star and Crescent.'

"On December 4, I faxed a letter to Dr. Harold Levy asking that nativity scenes be placed next to menorahs and crescents and stars in the schools. On December 14, I faxed another letter, this time commenting on the memo by Vignola. I said, 'It will come as a surprise to constitutional scholars, to say nothing of most of those in the Jewish and Islamic communities, to learn that their *religious* holiday symbols,

namely the menorah and the star and crescent, have been declared by your office to have solely a secular meaning.' His office promised to get an answer to me by the end of the day on December 17 but did not.

"As soon as we get standing, we will sue. But one thing's for sure: we will not allow the current policy to stand. It is outrageous that Christians are given a secular symbol while Jews and Muslims get their religious symbols in the schools."