

NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL SYSTEM DISCRIMINATES AGAINST CHRISTIANS

In December, the Catholic League charged 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.

William Donohue was disturbed when he learned that New York City Schools Chancellor Dr. Harold Levy said that "The Supreme Court has previously refused to permit erection of a nativity scene on public property." Dr. Levy's remarks came in reply to Donohue's request that nativity scenes be displayed in the public schools alongside menorahs. Donohue quickly corrected Dr. Levy's interpretation by citing decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court that allow nativity scenes on public property. He used the Catholic League's own nativity scene in Central Park as an example.

Noting the discriminatory conditions in the schools, Donohue said, "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." Donohue then commented, "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!"

Matters got worse when 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."

Donohue wrote to Dr. Levy, making public his remarks in a news release: "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.'"

The Catholic League is determined to secure standing by getting a Catholic family with children in the New York City public schools to take part in a lawsuit. This outrageous policy will not stand up in court and we will see that it doesn't.