

NYC ORTHODOX JEWS ARE RIGHT TO REBEL

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on the latest shutdown in New York City:

New York State Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio may not get along, but they have one thing in common: an insatiable appetite for power. They love it when they can control people. But they hit a brick wall with Orthodox Jews.

The Catholic League understands the need for reasonable protocols to combat Covid-19, but we object to directives that are discriminatory in application, and this is especially true when religious institutions are subjected to a more burdensome standard than non-religious ones. This is why we support the objections raised by the Orthodox Jewish community in the New York City area. We only wish Catholics would be as aggressive in pushing back against edicts that are patently unjust.

On October 7, Cuomo ordered the shutdown of some neighborhoods, many in Brooklyn and Queens, because of a spike in coronavirus cases. While the target of his directive is the Orthodox Jewish community, he did not hold back in penalizing Catholic churches and schools, even though neither is exhibiting a health problem.

De Blasio issued a new directive that went into effect October 8. Those who do not wear a mask will be fined up to \$1,000, and mass gatherings will be subject to fines up to \$15,000. His order is hypocritical, discriminatory and wholly indefensible.

Why are so many Orthodox Jews mad? For the same reason why New Yorkers who are not part of their community are mad. Both the governor and the mayor have allowed, and indeed justified,

mass gatherings in the form of protests. And now they want us to respect what they say?

Why are non-violent mass gatherings at synagogues and churches subject to shutdowns when violent mobs can roam the streets with impunity? As one Jewish reporter said to New York City's health commissioner, Dr. Dave Chokshi, "What justification can we tell readers—why do they have to be careful when the mayor carves out exceptions based on his own personal politics?"

The reaction of Borough Park Community Board leader Barry Spitzer was similar. "People in the community have lost a lot of trust in the government, because people were told they can't pray but thousands of people can gather in the streets to protest, or because rules kept changing from minute to minute without rhyme or reason." Another Jewish leader opined, "They had no issue with the demonstrations, with the protests with thousands of people in the streets."

When the mob was taking over bridges, burning police cars, and breaking into stores all over New York, de Blasio never tried to stop them. When asked in June why people cannot go to church or synagogue because of fear of Covid-19 infections, but they can riot in the streets, de Blasio said, "We're in the middle of a national crisis, a deep-seated crisis. There is no comparison." He was referring to what he said was "400 years of American racism."

In other words, if de Blasio agrees with the purpose of a protest—no matter how violent—Covid-19 restrictions can be thrown to the wind. But religious funerals cannot be held.

Now de Blasio has outdone himself. On October 7, he proved once again what a rank hypocrite he is. "There's a place for peaceful protests," he said, "but the NYPD will not tolerate people doing harm to others. There will be no tolerance for assaults, for damage to property, for setting fires."

But when it came to Antifa and Black Lives Matter, de Blasio

not only told the cops to tolerate their violence, he told them to stand down and do nothing. He allowed them to harm others, assault others, damage property and set fires. They did it night after night. He had plenty of tolerance for that.

When the governor of New York tells rock stars scheduled to perform at the MTV Video Awards in New York City that they don't have to abide by his order to quarantine for 14 days, and when the mayor of the City of New York treats people of faith as the enemy—while supporting rioters—it is no surprise that New Yorkers have turned cynical.

De Blasio and Cuomo have shot whatever moral authority they once had. No one should pay them any heed.

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