

NYC SCHOOLS DENY CHRISTIANS PARITY: HOLIDAY DISPLAY POLICY FAVORS JEWS AND MUSLIMS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on the Catholic League's on-going complaint with the New York City Board of Education regarding the display of crèches in the schools:

"On October 24, I wrote to Schools Chancellor Joel Klein asking to meet with him regarding the City's discriminatory holiday policy. 'There is no constitutional prohibition, or court ruling,' I said, 'that disallows the display of nativity scenes in the New York City public schools.' I am now in receipt of a letter from John DeMicoli of the Department of Education responding for the Chancellor. It is embarrassing to read.

"Mr. DeMicoli should be in school—there is no such word as 'Chreche' in the English language. Secondly, he says that the Department of Education's policy 'permits the display of holiday secular decorations with secular dimensions.' That's called a tautology: secular decorations can only have secular dimensions.

"Beyond that, he has the facts wrong: the 2nd Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals ruled in 2006 that the Department's policy of allowing the display of Jewish religious symbols (menorah) and Islamic religious symbols (star and crescent) was constitutional because it did not deny Christians secular symbols (the Christmas tree). However, it stressed that the federal district court erred when it declared the menorah and the star and crescent secular in nature—they are clearly

religious (New York City claimed that the Jewish and Islamic symbols were secular). Ergo, the Department of Education is denying Christians parity with Jews and Muslims by not allowing them to display their religious symbols. Moreover, the circuit court explicitly said, 'We do not here decide whether the City could, consistent with the Constitution, include a crèche in its holiday displays.'

"Accordingly, the Catholic League wants parity. We will contact Michael Best, General Counsel to the Chancellor, about this matter."

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