

NYT SPINS 9/11 CLERGY GAG RULE

Catholic League president Bill Donohue discusses how the *New York Times* is covering NYC Mayor Bloomberg's 9/11 clergy gag rule:

It is no secret that the *New York Times* is the most secular major newspaper in the United States, nor is it a secret that Mayor Bloomberg is a thoroughgoing secularist, so it was hardly surprising that the *Times* would find a secularist to explain why Bloomberg decided to censor the clergy from speaking at the 9/11 memorial ceremonies this Sunday.

Alan Wolfe is an atheist who directs the Center for Religion and Public Life at Boston College, a Jesuit-run institution, and it is his belief that America has changed drastically—almost unrecognizably—in the past ten years. We went from a unified culture to “complete Balkanization.” This allows the *Times* to conclude, “Ten years later, any consensus that existed about the appropriate role of religion in public ceremonies marking a monumental American trauma has fallen apart.”

If this tale is to be believed, then there should be plenty of evidence showing how the American people no longer want a role for religious expression at public events. But, of course, there isn't. So why make it up? To convince the reader that Bloomberg's censorial act is a better index of our culture today than the sentiments of his critics.

To understand what has changed, all we have to do is look at who's in charge. After the Twin Towers were hit, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani called New York Archbishop Edward Egan for assistance, sending a police car to pick him up. The next day, Giuliani said, “The only thing we can do now is remain calm

and focus on the rescue efforts...and pray.”

Bloomberg will have none of it. Indeed, when he speaks about prayer, he sounds foolish. This week, on “The View,” he said we need to remember that “there are people who don’t want us to say what we want to say, and, uh, pray the way we want to pray *and all that sort of stuff.*” [My emphasis.] The big change is not our culture—it’s our mayor.