

# OREGON SCHOOL BANS “GIVING TREE”

Catholic League president Bill Donohue describes the latest war on Christmas:

Michelle Zundel, principal of Bellview Elementary, situated in Oregon’s Ashland School District, says that one family didn’t like the “Giving Tree” displayed in the school lobby, so she had it removed. “The decision to remove the tree was a very difficult one because the important constitutional issues for a school are to maintain neutrality.” According to one news report, Ashland Superintendent Juli Di Chiro says that school officials are working on developing district-wide rules to address such issues.

All of this is based on ignorance: (a) a Christmas tree—never mind a “Giving Tree”—is not a religious symbol (b) there are no constitutional issues involved in displaying secular symbols in the schools, and (c) they have had a policy governing such matters since 1989.

Ashland School District 5 school officials ought to read their own policy, “Teaching about Religion.” Guideline #7 explicitly says: “No public school funds shall be used for an intended devotional display or religious symbols such as a Star of David, cross, crucifix, Christmas nativity scene or a Buddhist statue of sacred monkeys.”

Note that the policy says absolutely nothing about banning *secular* symbols such as a Christmas tree, never mind some fictional “Giving Tree.” That’s because there are no constitutional issues at stake.

In other words, this mean-spirited attempt to censor Christmas is totally contrived. It’s up to the parents, who will meet tonight, to take their school back.

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