

PAROCHIAL SCHOOLS DESERVE FEMA FUNDS

The decision by the Bush administration to help rebuild those areas hardest hit by Hurricane Katrina includes awarding public monies to parochial schools and other religious institutions (exclusive of houses of worship).

Catholic League president Bill Donohue endorsed this plan today:

“On both moral and legal grounds, the Bush administration made the right decision to provide federal funds to parochial schools in those areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Morally, it makes sense to help all institutions affected by a natural disaster, but constitutionally it could prove to be problematic to include houses of worship.

“Regarding this last point, granting emergency relief even to churches could be easily justified: President Thomas Jefferson provided \$300 in federal funds for the purpose of building a Catholic church for the Kaskaskia Indians.

“More recently, the U.S. Naval Academy received \$1.8 million in federal funds to build a Jewish Center, and in the facility there is a synagogue. Though Commander Rod Gibbons, Director of Public Affairs at the academy, called our office to say that none of the federal funds were spent on the synagogue, he has not replied to a letter I sent to him three weeks ago demanding evidence for his position. Moreover, he cannot explain why a huge Star of David has been erected on public property (it is in the atrium of the building—not in the synagogue). So as not to be misunderstood, we publicly supported the decision to give public monies for this enterprise: all we want is equal treatment.

“The Seattle Hebrew Academy received more than a half-million

dollars in a federal grant in 2002 to rebuild after being hit by an earthquake. That was the right decision then, and it is the right decision now for the government to help rebuild parochial schools in New Orleans.”