

# PUBLIC CELEBRATIONS OF HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the way Hanukkah and Christmas are being publicly celebrated:

“In today’s *New York Times*, there are four ads by major department stores wishing Jews Happy Hanukkah: Macy’s, Bloomingdale’s, Lord & Taylor and Saks Fifth Avenue (a fifth, Tiffany & Co., has an ad selling a menorah but extends no wishes). The Catholic League commends these stores for exercising good judgment and joins with them in wishing all Jews Happy Hanukkah. We wonder, however, why these stores, and others, have such a hard time wishing Christians Merry Christmas.

“The latest *Newsweek* poll shows that 84 percent of Americans are Christian; Jews represent less than two percent. In other words, the U.S. is more Christian than Israel is Jewish (approximately 72 percent of Israelis are Jewish), yet it is Christmas, not Hanukkah, that is considered controversial to celebrate. For example, menorahs are allowed in places like New York City public schools, but nativity scenes are banned. Similarly, menorahs can be found on public property in the Florida community of Bar Harbor Islands, but crèches are forbidden.

“It is sometimes difficult to discern whether the principal motive behind this kind of discrimination is malice or ignorance. How many times have we been told, typically by Jews, that they regard the menorah to be a secular symbol. Invariably, these are non-observant Jews, men and women whose ignorance of their own religion parallels the ignorance in the Christian community of its own heritage (many Christians think the Christmas tree is analogous to the menorah).

“So Happy Hanukkah to our Jewish brothers and sisters. We look forward to the day when Merry Christmas rolls off people’s lips with the same degree of alacrity. We also look forward to the day when both holidays are treated the way they are in Chicago’s Daley Plaza: not only are Christian and Jewish religious symbols featured—room has been made for the display of Islamic symbols as well.”