

R.I. TEACHERS CAN OBSERVE GOOD FRIDAY



Bill Donohue comments on a court decision ruling that Rhode Island teachers can absent themselves from school to observe Good Friday:

Jewish teachers in Cranston, Rhode Island are allowed to take off on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but Catholics have to teach on Good Friday. This didn't sit too well with Catholics, so on March 16 they sued. Now the edict, which was issued by school superintendent Judith Lundsten, has been overturned by court order.

As long as teachers submit their request by April 1, they can observe Good Friday, with impunity. A full court hearing will later determine whether teachers can commemorate Good Friday in future years. If the teachers lose, they may have to reimburse the school for the day off.

This issue should never have made its way to the courts. As I pointed out on March 19, "it is not the business of government agents to assess holy days, or religious traditions, by weighing them on their state scale." That is exactly what Lundsten did: she decided that because Catholics are not required to attend Good Friday services, they should not be allowed to go to Church services during the day.

There was a time when people such as Cardinal John O'Connor had to plead with professional baseball not to have opening day on Good Friday. Now we've descended to such a low that Catholic public school teachers have to fight for their right to attend liturgical services on Good Friday. What's

next—requiring Catholic employees to bring a pastor's note proving they were in church?