

RALLY DRAWS WIDE SUPPORT; MEDIA COVERAGE IS WORLDWIDE

By the time you read this, the rally on behalf of Mother Teresa will be over, but it is not likely that people will stop talking about it for some time.

The Catholic League staff spent a large part of the summer planning this event, and we are ever so happy with the strong backing we have received. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Hindus and Muslims were invited to speak at the August 26 rally, reflecting the wide base of support for our effort. No one can believe that Anthony Malkin, the owner of the Empire State Building, would want to deny a simple honor to Mother Teresa. All we asked him to do was to flick the switch and light the towers blue and white on the 100th anniversary of her birthday.

This is more than a rally—it is a cultural marker. The press from the *Houston Chronicle* to the *Hindustan Times* gave coverage to our Mother Teresa campaign because they knew what it represented: a statement made by Catholics that they will not be pushed around by the cultural elite. Important as Mother Teresa is to our rally, it transcends her: this is about the place of Roman Catholics in American society in the new millennium. The decision to deny Mother Teresa her due has had the effect of uniting the Catholic League with persons whom we have never dealt with before, bonding us with them in a way that is heartening. It is also something that sets the stage for future coalitions, and all because one rich, angry man decided to dig in his heels and say no to Mother Teresa. In this regard, the rabid support we received from the Albanian community—they are so proud of their saintly daughter—has been especially endearing.

Liberals and conservatives, Republicans and Democrats, people

of all faiths and none at all, expressed their support for our campaign. We heard from athletes and coaches, from comedians and celebrities, as well as from cardinals, bishops (several from India), priests, brothers, nuns and the laity. Such a cross-section of Americans would be hard to duplicate. This is what real diversity looks like: persons of every race, ethnicity, religion and class standing together as one against injustice.

We are struck by the degree of unsolicited support. From Belfast to Bombay, municipal and office buildings promised to light up blue and white, as well as places like the Peace Bridge that joins Buffalo and Fort Erie, Ontario.

The next issue of *Catalyst* will feature stories and pictures about this historic rally. This is a one-time event, but its effect on the culture will hopefully endure.