

RELIGIOUS CLUBS CAN MEET AFTER SCHOOL

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that religious groups can meet after school hours in public schools. The 6-3 ruling in *Good News Club v. Milford Central Schools* declared that it was discriminatory to ban a Christian club from meeting after school hours simply because the club was religious in nature. Writing for the majority, Justice Clarence Thomas argued that to deny the religious club the right to meet constituted “viewpoint discrimination” and therefore violated the First Amendment principle of free speech.

Catholic League president William Donohue, who debated this issue on a recent PBS show, “Debate, Debate,” congratulated the court today:

“The Catholic League is delighted that the Supreme Court affirmed the right of Christian students in public schools to meet after school for religious reasons. The club is entirely voluntary: those opposed to the club are free not to join. But they have no right to impose their secular agenda on students. If students can meet to discuss atheism, then surely they can meet to discuss Christianity.

“The losing side in this battle is made up of those who are driven more by an animus toward the public expression of religion than by any alleged fidelity to the Constitution. The fact that no coercion is involved in the establishment of religious clubs meeting after school should allay their fears. The fact that no public school teacher is involved in proselytizing efforts should similarly allay their fears. But none of this matters to those extremists who are motivated by a devout insistence on the eradication of religion from the public square.

“The high court understood that this was a free speech issue and not a matter of church and state. The Catholic League awaits the day when the enemies of the public expression of religion realize that their agenda promotes censorship, pure and simple. But we won’t hold our breath.”