

# RELIGIOUS LIBERTY AND “RELIGIOUS LIBERTY”



Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

Here's a scenario worth contemplating: let's assume that the federal government tries to censor the *New York Times*, and that critics of the newspaper take it to task for complaining that their "free speech" rights have been violated. Would not the *Times* be justly angered at the suggestion that their First Amendment right to free speech was being discussed as if it were their so-called free speech rights? Well, here's how it handles the religious liberty rights of Catholics, now under fire from President Obama.

- Reporter Laurie Goodstein writes a story on "Bishops Open 'Religious Liberty' Drive" (11-15-11)
- An editorial slams Mitt Romney for "promising to defend the Roman Catholic Church's 'religious liberty'" (2-2-12)
- An editorial discusses the "phony crisis over 'religious liberty'" (2-11-12)

Bloggers and other newspapers are also picking up on the "religious liberty" rights of Catholics (Pam's House Blend, 2-10-12; Ira Chernus, [religiondispatches.org](http://religiondispatches.org), 2-21-12; an editorial in Vermont's *Brattleboro Reformer*, 2-21-12).

The *New York Times*' game of dumbing down the religious liberty rights of Catholics even extends to mocking the title of pro-life leaders. On Feb. 16, Richard Doerflinger, the associate director of the Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities of the bishops' conference, was referred to in a news story as the

“associate director of ‘pro-life activities.’”

It would be wrong to conclude that the *Times* always speaks derisively about religious liberty. In an editorial on Nov. 22, 2010, it pointedly said, “Mr. Obama respects religious liberty.” And on Sept. 19, 2011, it said, “Mayor Michael Bloomberg rightly stood up for religious liberty.” The issue? Bloomberg’s support for building a mosque at Ground Zero.