

ROLE OF RELIGION IN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

The mention of Christ's name in Monday night's Republican presidential campaign has triggered a national conversation on the role of religion and politics.

Catholic League president William Donohue, who will address this issue on tonight's edition of *Hardball* with Chris Matthews (MSNBC), made the following remarks today:

"Surely there are those who run for public office, including the office of the presidency, who exploit religion for crass political purposes. But it is dangerous to assume that the mere invocation of God's name, or some recitation of faith, will lead us down a scary road where church and state will merge. That is pure demagoguery, designed to intimidate those who believe in the public expression of religion.

"Would those who are upset with George W. Bush and Gary Bauer for citing Christ as the 'political philosopher or thinker' with whom they most identify with be just as upset had they answered Ayn Rand, the high Objectivist queen of atheism? Would those who have no problem marketing their anti-religion message in the public schools be just as upset had a candidate invoked the name of Hillel or Buddha? Speaking of Buddha, why is it that Al Gore caught less flack from his critics when he used a Buddhist temple for a fundraiser than he did for brandishing his faith in Christ?

"Most revealing of all is the attack on Gore and Bush for advocating the utilization of faith-based institutions for social services. Those with an agenda to eradicate all vestiges of religion from the public square will seize on any opportunity they can to exploit this issue. It is they, and not those who may be guilty of pandering, who are the real

threat to our freedoms.”