

STATE DEPT. FAITH CHIEF IS GOOD FIT



Bill Donohue comments on the appointment of Shaun Casey to head the State Department's new Office of Faith-Based Community Initiative:

In the *New York Times* August 7 obituary on Robert Bellah, it credited the sociologist with inviting a discussion on the role of civil religion in American society. He described civil religion as "a set of beliefs, symbols and rituals" that date to the Founding; they represent "the obligation, both collective and individual, to carry out God's will on earth."

Last year, religion professor Shaun Casey said, "I, frankly, am glad American civil religion is dying." On the same day that Bellah's obituary appeared, Casey was chosen to head the State Department's new Faith-Based Community Initiative. He did not say what he will do to hasten the death of our civil religion, nor did he speak to what exactly he would like to put in its place. Perhaps he will unveil a secular agenda, or a statist substitute, in the name of advancing religion, of course.

The White House Faith-Based director, Melissa Rogers, predictably gushed over Casey on Wednesday. It's what she said at the end of her remarks that mattered most: she congratulated Mara Vanderslice Kelly for her yeoman work on faith-based issues.

In 2004, I exposed Vanderslice, who was working for presidential contender John Kerry, as a left-wing activist who had spoken at ACT-UP rallies; this gay group was responsible for busting into St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1989 during Mass

and spitting the Eucharist on the floor. She was immediately subjected to a gag rule. I was blamed for Kerry's decision to silence her.

Mara never went away, and in 2006 she was named one of the 12 most important religious voices in the Democratic Party. Shaun Casey was also on that list. Looks like Kerry has chosen another religious superstar to join his team. Just think of it—if these are Kerry's religion-friendly sources, imagine what his atheist friends at Martha's Vineyard must be like!