

# OFF-BROADWAY PLAY, LATE NIGHT CATECHISM, MOCKS CATHOLICISM

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, attended the preview last night of the off-Broadway play, **Late Night Catechism**, and issued the following remarks today:

**"Late Night Catechism** continues the artistic assault on Roman Catholicism by ridiculing virtually every aspect of Catholicism. Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the Saints, the sacraments, Catholic schools, Catholic customs—nothing is considered too off-base to merit derision. In particular, the Virgin Mary is held up to disparagement in a most offensive way. Every caricature imaginable about Catholics finds its way into this play.

"This is an interactive play, meaning that members of the audience get a chance to vent their own experiences and feelings about Catholicism. Predictably, the crowd is only too willing to add to the tenor of the play by contributing nuggets of scorn. The sexual statements that the play makes about Catholic beliefs and practices are unusually coarse.

"What is perhaps most offensive about the play is its venue: St. Luke's Lutheran Church. That a Lutheran church would host a play that mocks another religion is not only irresponsible, it rips at ecumenical dialogue. It is a telling commentary that advertisements about **Late Night Catechism** simply say that it appears at St. Luke's Church on W.46 Street. If the play's sponsors and the church's pastor were honest, they would not hesitate to emphasize that it is a Lutheran church that is hosting this attack on Catholicism."

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# REV. SHARPTON WRONG TO DECLARE CANDIDACY FROM CHURCH

Yesterday, Rev. Al Sharpton declared his candidacy for the Mayor of New York from Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem.

William Donohue of the Catholic League commented on this unusual move today:

“It was wrong for Rev. Al Sharpton to launch his candidacy for the Mayor of New York from a church. If the boundaries between church and state are to be respected, then surely it cannot be seriously argued that what Rev. Sharpton did yesterday was acceptable. He not only made a highly partisan speech, he exhorted the congregants to support him in his run for public office.

“What is particularly troubling about this incident is that virtually no one in the media has seen fit to criticize Rev. Sharpton. But if a Catholic priest even comes close to giving a sermon that touches on a political issue, he is summarily denounced by civil libertarians and reporters alike. This is not the first time that a double standard has been invoked: there are many would-be public office holders who have campaigned from a Protestant church and there are many instances where a priest—most especially Cardinal O’Connor—have been blasted by the media for merely commenting on public policy.

“‘The next time a Catholic priest is lambasted for addressing a political issue in a church, it is hoped that those who are now silent in the wake of Rev. Sharpton’s statement will refrain from criticizing the priest. They cannot have it both ways.”

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## **PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS SMEARS BOYS TOWN**

In the fall edition of "Animal Times," People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) sharply criticizes the Boys Town National Research Hospital for doing research on animals; the hospital received nearly \$3 million in U.S. grants for experiments on cats. What the Catholic League is objecting to is the opening statement in the article entitled, "Boys Town: May God Forgive Them!" The following is a direct quote:

"While a kindly priest named Father Flanagan was turning Boys Town into a world-famous home for troubled boys, he never dreamed that a few decades later, in the 1980s, his haven would be involved in a scandalous pedophile ring. Now, a PETA undercover investigator has found shocking evidence that something has gone wrong at the Nebraska Boys Town."

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, registered his outrage about this incident today:

"PETA professes concern about ethical treatment, yet it has no qualms about treating Boys Town unethically. Whether PETA is lying, or is purely ignorant of the facts, is not known.

But this much is true: there never was a pedophile ring

associated with Boys Town. Indeed, spokesmen for Boys Town have already branded PETA's smear 'malicious libel.'

"In 1990, a grand jury in Douglas County totally absolved Boys Town of any wrongdoing stemming from charges of sexual misconduct. Indeed, the Grand Jury Report said that it 'believes that the Omaha community should acknowledge the positive influence of Boys Town in dealing with troubled young people. Boys Town is an asset to the community as well as to the nation.'

"It is mind-boggling that PETA would make such irresponsible charges, especially in light of court records. It is no wonder that PETA has heard from the former General Counsel for Father Flanagan's Boys' Home. At the very least, PETA owes Boys Town a public apology. It also owes all American Catholics an apology for its slanderous remarks."

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## **LET GIULIANI NEGOTIATE LEGALITIES OF SCHOOL PLAN**

New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani has offered to negotiate the legalities involved in his plan to place 1,000 of the most poorly-educated public school students in parochial schools. This development, along with the willingness of Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew to consider the mayor's novel approach, bodes well for the prospective beneficiaries of the program. It also bodes well for the public that will be well-served by the results of Mayor Giuliani's efforts.

Commenting on this aspect of the program today is the president of the Catholic League, William A. Donohue:

"Those who are truly interested in assisting the poor will welcome Mayor Giuliani's initiative to place some of the lowest-achieving public school students in parochial schools. To be sure, there are constitutional questions that need to be resolved, but Mayor Giuliani's determination to find a way that services the poor without violating the First Amendment should be given strong support. Having argued cases before the Supreme Court, Mayor Giuliani is no stranger to constitutional issues and is therefore uniquely qualified to address the legalities involved in his public-parochial plan.

"The Catholic League calls on New Yorkers of every faith to allow Mayor Giuliani the time he needs to develop a workable plan. If he succeeds, both the poor and the public will win. To oppose his initiative is to ratify the status quo, and that is clearly unacceptable."

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