

ATHEISTS DESERVE THEIR OWN HOLIDAY—NOTHINGDAY

Catholic League president William Donohue released the following comments on the Christmas wars today:

“Robert Tiernan, a spokesman for the Freedom from Religion Foundation, is demanding that atheists be represented in next year’s Parade of Lights in Denver. He wants a ‘winter solstice’ float instead of a Christian one. He deserves better.

“Atheists deserve to have their own holiday—Nothingday—the purpose of which would be to honor what they believe in, which is absolutely nothing. Nothingday would be held on the day of the winter solstice and would be celebrated by holding nationwide conferences explicitly designed to accomplish nothing.

“For example, there would be seminars and workshops on the virtue of standing for nothing. Participants would be invited to watch a video on the meaning of Nothingday and would then discover—to their utter delight—that there’s nothing on the tape. Tables outside conference rooms would be set up, though there would be nothing on them. Breakout sessions would allow participants to huddle in corners for the express purpose of doing nothing. When they reassemble, their team leader would be able to report that they have accomplished absolutely nothing. Naturally, no minutes would be kept.

“They would then repair to the cocktail lounge where they would all be given empty glasses. Dinner would follow, though nothing would be served. At the awards ceremony, those who best represent the spirit of nothing would, of course, be given nothing for their efforts. Best of all, the keynote speaker wouldn’t open his mouth, allowing everyone to just sit

there, staring endlessly into space.

“Quite frankly, this sounds a heck of a lot better than the conferences I’ve been to.”

CHRISTIANS ORGANIZE TO RECLAIM CHRISTMAS

The following examples show how Christians are defending Christmas:

- Last year, a Glenview, Illinois firehouse was told it could not display Christmas decorations. This year they won approval.
- Last year, an 8-year-old boy from Plano, Texas was forbidden from giving his friends candy canes in school. This year he could.
- Last year, a crèche in Cranston, Rhode Island triggered a lawsuit. This year it is up without controversy.
- Christians have organized to protest the exclusion of nativity scenes from the same South Florida malls that allow menorahs.
- When a school in New Jersey banned the singing of Christmas songs, local residents staged their own “protest” concert.
- When four atheists protested the display of a nativity scene in Milford, Connecticut, 200 pro-crèche supporters greeted them.
- Atheists in Reynoldsburg, Ohio lost in their effort to stop the display of a nativity scene.
- Residents of a lower East Side housing project in New York City successfully protested a ban on Christmas

lights.

- When Christmas songs were banned from school buses in a Chicago suburb, parents began their meeting with school officials by singing “We Wish You a Merry Christmas.” They won.
- Singing “Silent Night” was first banned from a concert in the schools of Egg Harbor, New Jersey. The ruling was then reversed.
- Stafford township in New Jersey initially balked on displaying a crèche, but later reversed its decision.
- Residents of Pasco County, Florida revolted when Christmas trees were banned. The decision was reversed.
- Taxpayers in Mustang, Oklahoma were so angry at the banning of a nativity play in a school that they killed a school bond bid.
- Fairfield, Connecticut allows nativity scenes to be displayed for three days, but only if they are monitored around the clock. Nello Ceccarelli, who is 89, agreed to do just that.

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked: “The cultural fascists didn’t count on such resistance. The revolt must continue.”

NATIVITY SCENE DISPLAYED IN CENTRAL PARK

Catholic League president William Donohue remarked today on the league’s crèche in Central Park:

“Starting today, and lasting for almost two weeks, there will be a nativity scene in Central Park. The crèche is erected by the Catholic League every December, and it is done with the

permission of the New York City Parks Department. Unfortunately, the same city that allows us the right to put a life-size nativity scene on public property forbids us from putting a miniature version of it in the public schools. Yet Jews can put a menorah in both Central Park and the schools; this issue is currently in the courts. The Catholic League does not want Jews to lose their rights—it simply wants equal rights for Christians.

“The fact that the Catholic League can put up a nativity scene on public property in New York City—without violating the Constitution or triggering a lawsuit—is a lesson that municipal officials all across the nation should study. Unfortunately, many public officials act cowardly, as in Pennsylvania’s Beaver County. Officials there recently pulled a crèche that had been displayed in a public park for weeks, all because they feared an ACLU lawsuit.

“The only way the cultural fascists at the ACLU will be defeated is by defying them. What they seek is confrontation, so I say let’s give it to them in spades: let’s confront them in the courts and in the court of public opinion. That they promote censorship in the name of tolerance makes them the ultimate hypocrites.”

RASH OF VANDALIZED NATIVITY SCENES

Catholic League president William Donohue today discussed the latest wave of vandalized nativity scenes:

“On December 10, we issued a news release documenting 16 instances of nativity scenes that were vandalized nation

wide. Since then, there have been 24 more reported incidents that have come to our attention. Here is where they occurred: Grand Rapids, Michigan; Costa Mesa, California; Santa Cruz, California; Anchorage, Alaska; Hanover, Pennsylvania; Lansdale, Pennsylvania; Knoxville, Tennessee; Charlotte, North Carolina; Epping, New Hampshire; Tiverton, Massachusetts; Neenah, Wisconsin; Morningside, Iowa; Diamondhead, Mississippi; Maplewood, Minnesota; Baxter County, Arkansas; Murrieta, California; Grand Traverse County, Michigan; Plainfield, New Jersey (2 crèches were vandalized); Volusia County, Florida; Eau Claire, Wisconsin; Princeton, Indiana; Whitman, Massachusetts; Norwalk, Connecticut.

“So what’s going on? The vandals in Norwalk, Connecticut gave us an idea. Not only did they thrash a nativity scene, they wrote profanity and drew satanic symbols on one of the figures. This isn’t the act of some crazy drunks—it is the act of hate-filled persons.

“To think that the raging culture wars aren’t integral to this phenomenon is nonsense. Our hope is that the guilty get the book thrown at them.”

HATING CHRISTMAS IS NOW CHIC

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on some disturbing responses to Christmas:

“In San Francisco, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, a band of characters the *Los Angeles Times* affectionately calls a group of ‘queer nuns,’ has been bashing Christmas all month. In Minneapolis, gay-themed Christmas bashing has been happening at the Hennepin Center for the Arts and the Brave New Workshop. To understand why this is going on, consider

what one New Hampshire non-Christian said when asked about Christmas celebrations in the schools: 'It's offensive to those who don't celebrate it.' Better yet is Phil Goodstein, a Denver historian who recently labeled the nativity scene 'utterly obnoxious.' Julie Wells, also of Denver, confesses that 'I wish they had kidnapped the Baby Jesus when they kidnapped Rudolph,' adding that she fantasizes about 'driving a Chevy Blazer' over a crèche. And both atheist Christopher Hitchens (always the contrarian), and Dallas Cowboy fullback Darian Barnes, boasted over the weekend how much they 'hate Christmas.'

"One of the most offensive incidents this Christmas season occurred recently in Plainfield, Illinois, outside of Chicago. At Central School, a song called 'I Hate This Holiday' was listed in the holiday concert program. The song, which is really a parody from the choral 'Frosty's First Adventure,' was taken by school bus driver Carmen Brown as a real slap in the face at Christians; she called for a boycott of the concert. In stepped Linda DiLeo, the school's principal. She, too, thought the song was meant to offend, but nonetheless justified it: 'We have Jewish children, we have children who celebrated Ramadan a couple of weeks ago. We take into account that we aren't all celebrating the same holiday and try to put on programs that everyone can celebrate.'

"In other words, DiLeo thinks it is necessary to bash Christians at Christmastime because Jews and Muslims don't celebrate Christmas. This is rank bigotry—against all three religious groups—and that is why we are making a formal complaint to the Illinois State Board of Education."

FRANK RICH, HOLLYWOOD AND SECULAR JEWS

Catholic League president William Donohue responded today to a column by Frank Rich that is posted on the *New York Times* website and will appear in Sunday's paper:

"Frank Rich quotes me as saying that 'Hollywood is controlled by secular Jews who hate Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular.' He fails to mention that in the same segment of the MSNBC show where I made this remark, I also said, 'You have got secular Jews. You have got embittered ex-Catholics, including a lot of ex-Catholic priests who hate the Catholic Church, wacko Protestants in the same group....' Nor did he mention that I later said, 'there are secularists from every ethnic and religious stock,' and that when people talk about Hollywood, they are 'talking mostly about secular Jews.'

"Now consider what the *New York Times* said in an article about 'The Passion' on June 24: 'Significantly, in the movie industry, which tends to be liberal and secular in outlook, as well as disproportionately Jewish, few people interviewed about 'Passion' said they had actually seen the movie.' Hollywood observer Tom O'Neil even said that the movie is suffering from 'the Jewish problem,' by which he meant that Jews who vet films for the Oscars aren't happy about the movie's script. And what about Frank Rich? He says that when the term 'entertainment elite' is invoked by Mel's defenders, they are referring to a group that 'just happens to be Jewish.' And it is he who has said that 'Jews have had no shortage of clout in show business from day one.'

"Frank Rich has been blasting me for years for my attacks on anti-Catholicism. Whether it is my objections to a play that portrays Jesus having sex with the apostles, or my complaints

about a dung-stained portrait of Our Blessed Mother, count on Rich to damn me for protesting the bigotry while he defends the offending work. As for Mel's epic film, Rich characteristically dubbed it 'a porn movie.'

"Jews who know me know that I have long fought anti-Semitism. They also know that I will not be intimidated by Frank Rich."

NOT ALL HOLIDAY CARDS ARE CREATED EQUAL

The following is a comparative analysis of current holiday greeting cards:

Hallmark

Of the 104 Christmas cards, nine are religious; one mentions Jesus and none features a nativity scene. In its "Humor" category, three have mild scatological references and one has sexual overtones. Of the 5 Hanukkah cards, four feature menorahs; even the one "Humor" card has a menorah. Of the 6 Kwanzaa cards, all are respectful and none is humorous.

Yahoo

There are 31 categories of Christmas cards, one of which is "Religious." There are 7 e-cards dubbed "Risqué" that are replete with sexual gags. In the "Rude" category, there are 17 scatologically oriented cards. All of the 12 Hanukkah cards are respectful, most of which have a menorah or Star of David. All of the 24 Kwanzaa cards are respectful.

American Greetings

Among its e-cards, there are over 200 Christmas cards listed among several categories. There are 119 “Merry Christmas” cards, 39 “Religious” cards and 18 “Rude” cards (most feature flatulence and urine jokes). The 35 “Happy Hanukkah” cards and the 9 “Family” Hanukkah cards are evenly split between secular and religious. Of the 14 “Funny” Hanukkah cards, all are respectful. There were no disrespectful Kwanzaa cards among the 24 listed. Among American Greetings’ Create and Print cards, there is no “Rude” section for Hanukkah or Kwanzaa, just for Christmas (some of which include oral sex jokes).

Catholic League president William Donohue concludes: “Not to include any disrespectful holiday cards for Jews and African Americans does violence to the multicultural virtue of inclusion. How did this happen?”

LET’S HAVE A PARTY—BUT NOT A CHRISTMAS ONE

Catholic League president William Donohue today addressed what’s been happening to Christmas parties in the workplace:

“For decades, employees at *Time* magazine had a Christmas party and looked forward to receiving a Christmas bonus. But starting three years ago, the party was banned and so were the Christmas bonuses. This is not to say that bonuses are no longer given—they are—it’s just that the dreaded ‘C-word’ is no longer associated with them. This is progress.

“The mayor of Somerville, Massachusetts recently apologized for calling the city’s Christmas party a Christmas party. It’s now a Holiday party.

“ProGroup diversity specialists advise that one way around the ‘December Dilemma’ is to ‘keep holidays inclusive and informative.’ So they suggest, ‘try using seasonal themes rather than a holiday one.’ Good idea—holiday themes remind people of Christmas.

“Simm Lieberman Associates bluntly advises, ‘make sure your Holiday party isn’t a Christmas party in disguise.’ Off with the red and green!

“The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding is not too understanding of Christmas this year, and that is why it wants a ‘Seasonal’ or ‘Winter’ party and a ‘Seasonal’ or ‘Holiday’ exchange.

“Matt Cherry of the Institute of Humanist Studies also favors ‘Holiday’ parties over Christmas parties and advocates secret ‘Snowflakes’ instead of secret ‘Santas.’

“An AP story says corporations are ‘barring religious music from cubicles’ and are calling their Christmas parties ‘end of the year’ parties.

“If you’re looking for an explanation for all this, consider what Arlene Vernon of HrxInc says: employers need to be ‘sensitive to the fact that holidays don’t make everyone happy.’ If she had any guts, she’d advocate banning Christmas altogether, but that may affect her profits.”

CENSORING CHRISTMAS IN THE WORKPLACE

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on attempts to censor Christmas in the workplace:

“The University of Alabama’s Office of Cultural Diversity recommends that all nativity scenes should be banned because they are ‘religion-centered.’ The menorah, which is a Jewish religious symbol, is ‘fine’ because it is really a ‘secular’ symbol. Employees are also instructed to ‘avoid confronting others from different religions about their beliefs.’ Failure to do so may result in ‘unintentional oppression or hostilities.’ They actually said this.

“An attorney at Strauss & Troy in Cincinnati warns that ‘if the workplace is permeated with religious symbols—presumably of another religion—to the extent that the employee feels intimidated, ridiculed or insulted, he or she could make the claim that the company has allowed or created a hostile environment.’ The bottom line: the bigot is not the problem.

“Penelope Trunk, a columnist for a Virginia weekly, titled a recent piece, ‘Skipping Christmas: Erase Holiday from the Office.’ She says that ‘acting as if everyone has the ‘holiday spirit’ squelches the spirit of workplace diversity.’ She also objects that as a Jew she is forced to ‘take a holiday’ on Christmas. Why the anger? ‘No stores are open. There’s nothing on TV. Most restaurants are closed. It’s a boring day, a good day to be at work.’ Talk about oppression! Perhaps her boss could give her the keys to the office that day.

“What bothers these cultural fascists is traditional morality. For example, consider what the nation’s top labor law firm, San Francisco’s Littler Mendelson, said on December

10: 'Renewed interest in moral values—as evidenced by the recent presidential election—and increased religious activity in the workplace can lead to clashes during the holiday season.'

"This may explain why New York's Bar Building is featuring a menorah in the lobby but no Christmas decorations. But there is a big bundle of twigs shaped like a diamond with a red sash made out of what looks like pantyhose. No wonder those who work there call it a 'Blair Witch Christmas.' All this is courtesy of the high priests of tolerance."

CIRCUIT COURT HEARS NYC NATIVITY CASE

Oral arguments will be presented today in a case of national significance to Christians. At issue is whether it is legal to display Jewish and Muslim religious symbols in the New York City schools, but not Christian ones. For the past few years, New York City schools have allowed the menorah and the crescent and star, but not the nativity scene. The Catholic League secured a plaintiff to challenge this decision, and the Thomas More Law Center provided an attorney.

Last December, Judge Charles Sifton of the U.S. District Court ruled in favor of New York City's policy. He ruled that the menorah and crescent and star have a secular dimension while the nativity scene was "purely religious." This is the decision that is being appealed.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“In his ruling last December, Judge Sifton said that holiday displays ‘must be reviewed as perceived by the children, Christian children in particular, but not one hyper-sensitive Catholic child.’ So if Catholics complain about discrimination, it must be due to their hyper-sensitivity. But what if the policy were reversed—what if menorahs and crescents and stars were censored but nativity scenes were allowed? Would the protesting Jews and Muslims be seen as hyper-sensitive by Judge Sifton?

“Even more curious is the position of the ADL. Last September, the ADL filed an amicus in this case on the side of keeping the menorah in the schools while banning nativity scenes. The crèche, it said, was an ‘overly religious’ symbol. It did not say what kind of meter it possesses to measure such things, but we’d sure like to buy one.

“If the menorah were banned from the same schools that allowed the nativity scene, the Catholic League would be filing an amicus on the side of protesting Jews. That the ADL is once again working against Catholics is as revealing as it is disturbing. We won’t forget it.

“In any event, when we look for our friends in the Jewish community, we look to people like Rabbi Daniel Lapin of Toward Tradition, and not the ADL.”