

ROBERTS ASKED ABOUT HIS RELIGION

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on questions that were asked yesterday about John Roberts' religion:

"Senator Arlen Specter and Senator Dianne Feinstein both asked John Roberts yesterday whether he agreed with the comment made by President John F. Kennedy in 1960 regarding matters of church and state. Neither one of them even hinted at the fact that Kennedy was forced to make his infamous Houston speech just to ward off the anti-Catholic bigots who were trying to destroy him. Indeed, by taking us down this dirty road again, Specter and Feinstein have brought us right back to where JFK started.

"In response, Roberts agreed that his religion would not dictate his decisions as a judge, but professed not to understand what Feinstein meant by 'absolute separation of church and state'; he then briefly cited the two cases on the Ten Commandments that the Supreme Court decided, with different outcomes, in the high court's last session.

"Roberts handled himself well, but the shame of it is that he had to answer these questions at all. What did Specter and Feinstein expect him to say—that he takes his marching orders from the Vatican? Too bad one of the senators on the Judiciary Committee didn't interrupt Specter by asking him why he didn't press Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer to discuss the relationship between their Jewish heritage and their jurisprudential philosophy. And too bad Feinstein wasn't asked whether she believes that having 'In God We Trust' on our coins violates her absolutist understanding of the First Amendment.

“For the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee to probe Roberts on his religion is a disgrace. And for Feinstein to do so, coming on the heels of her anti-Catholic remark the day before blaming the Catholic Church for the death of Jews in Budapest during the Holocaust, shows a boldness that is beyond belief.”

SEN. FEINSTEIN OWES CATHOLICS AN APOLOGY

Catholic League president William Donohue has asked Senator Dianne Feinstein to apologize to Catholics for a remark she made today at the hearings of Supreme Court nominee John Roberts:

“In a prepared statement today at the hearings for John Roberts, Senator Dianne Feinstein said she was going to question the Supreme Court nominee on ‘the constitutional provision of providing for the separation of church and state.’ As an example of religious persecution, she cited Jews who lost their lives in Budapest during the Holocaust, a tragedy, she said, that ‘occurred in the name of religion.’

“At the time of the Holocaust, 67 percent of Hungary was Catholic, so we know who Senator Feinstein was blaming. Her remark is obscene. These are the words of Rabbi David Dalin, author of the just-published book, *The Myth of Hitler’s Pope: How Pope Pius XII Rescued Jews from the Nazis*: ‘Jeno Levai, the great Hungarian Jewish historian, was so angered by accusations of papal ‘silence’ that he wrote *Hungarian Jewry and the Papacy: Pius XII Did Not Remain Silent* (published in English in 1968), with a powerful introduction and epilogue by

Robert M.W. Kempner, the deputy chief U.S. prosecutor at Nuremburg.’ Levai demonstrated how Catholic Church officials ‘intervened again and again on the instructions of the pope,’ the result of which was that ‘in the autumn and winter of 1944 there was practically no Catholic Church institution in Budapest where persecuted Jews did not find refuge.’

“There are three issues at work here. Number one, Feinstein shows an appalling ignorance of the Holocaust. Two, she blames Catholics—the very ones who came to the rescue of Jews in Budapest—not Nazis. Three, she fails to understand that had the First Amendment provision on religious liberty been operative in Nazi Germany, Hitler would not have been able to use the power of the state to club Christianity.

“Senator Feinstein has no track record of bigotry towards Catholics, but her remarks today call for an apology nonetheless.”

SHOULD PRIESTS HAVE RIGHTS?

Catholic League president William Donohue replied today to the latest statement by SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests):

“Gerald Payne, Kentucky’s SNAP coordinator, wants state authorities to warn residents when Catholic priests who have been accused, *but not convicted*, of sexual abuse live in their neighborhood. Those who think this is an anomaly are wrong: the headquarters of SNAP is flagging this story on the front page of its website.

“It is not everyday that a national advocacy organization, on either the right or the left, argues that civil liberties

should be suspended for one class of citizens. Indeed, this kind of tactic is usually branded fascistic. But this is what happens when an organization that used to be in the media spotlight is increasingly ignored—it tends to become more radical. And make no mistake about it, the reason the media are shunning SNAP (and groups like it) is a direct consequence of the reforms instituted by the Catholic Church: the new policies make SNAP's very existence moot.

“In any event, to say that SNAP has snapped would be a gross understatement: It has fully discredited itself and will be unable to recover whatever credibility it once had.”

DUMP FEMA: FEDS SHOULD AID CHURCHES

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke today about the way government agencies and churches have responded to Hurricane Katrina:

“In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, two things seem obvious: the federal, state and local government response has been a disaster, and the response of churches has been nothing short of heroic. If there is any lesson to be learned, it is that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) should be dumped and that federal aid should be given to churches and other houses of worship that participate in emergency relief efforts. But the aid, either in the form of reimbursements or grants, must be offered without compromising the autonomy of churches.

“The evidence that government cannot do the job of churches is overwhelming. To take one example, there is an article in

today's *New York Times* entitled, 'A New Meaning for 'Organized Religion': It Helps the Needy Quickly.' The news story details the failure of FEMA and the triumph of churches. Regarding the response of government, the article reports that 'many people said they could not wait that long, or did not have the patience to deal with all the bureaucratic mix-ups.' Fortunately, the article says, 'churches stepped into the void in what observers say is probably the largest such outpouring in recent memory, with tens of thousands of displaced people stretched out across the country.'

"The time has come for common sense to prevail: we need to end the stranglehold that the paranoid church-and-state extremists have had on directing public policy. And that means that in times of emergency, a new partnership between government and religion should be forged: federal dollars—without any strings attached—should be given to churches that provide emergency relief. It's time we put the best interests of the needy first."

KATRINA BRINGS OUT THE DEVIL IN THEM

Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, made the following observations today on the way some are reacting to Hurricane Katrina:

"Katrina has definitely brought out the devil in some people. Innocent persons are dying down South and all Lambda Legal Defense attorney Ken Upton can worry about is whether Louisiana's ban on civil unions means that homosexual couples will not be given hospital visitation rights, etc. As he told

his buddies at 365gay.com, 'It underscores all of the inequities same-sex couples face.'

"Even nuttier is the reaction of Michael Marcavage, director of the anti-Catholic Christian group, Repent America: he blames gays for the hurricane. Why? New Orleans was to host a 'Southern Decadence' celebration this weekend, and now that it has been cancelled, Marcavage concludes that 'this act of God destroyed a wicked city.' As for the innocent victims, Marcavage says there are none: 'Let us not forget that the citizens of New Orleans tolerated and welcomed the wickedness in their city for so long.' In other words, this is God's idea of payback.

"Food, water, clothing—the basics of life—these are the kinds of things desperate people need. So what does an animal-rights group, Noah's Wish, send? Grief counselors for cats and dogs! Not to be outdone, Planned Parenthood, which is drowning in federal dollars, shows how pro-women it is by offering birth control pills and emergency contraception kits. To top it off, they're giving their prizes away free for one whole month! And at Florida Atlantic University, condoms are being distributed to dorm students *as a hurricane supply*.

"They're all mad. In a sane society, they'd be locked up. But not here—with the exception of the website-based Repent America, all the others are tax-exempt organizations. Now how's that for serving the public interest?"

PROBING ROBERTS ON RELIGION:

THE GAME PLAN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today on how some senators will probe John Roberts on religion at the hearings next week:

“The Catholic League has detailed the way critics of John Roberts have ripped him about his religion (click [here](#)). While the red flags noting his attendance at a ‘traditional’ Catholic church with his ‘pro-life’ wife continue to be flown, it is unlikely that Kennedy, Durbin, Leahy and Schumer will press Roberts too hard about his ‘personal’ views. Instead, they will try to paint him as an extremist. And in doing so, they will pick up on what advocacy groups are now saying.

“Americans United for Separation of Church and State, People for the American Way and the Alliance for Justice have all issued reports on Roberts; they have their talking points down well. None of these groups has ever had the slightest interest in defending religious liberty—their entire understanding of the First Amendment provision on religion is centered on talk about a mythical ‘wall’ separating church and state.

“Here’s the proof. In the Americans United 19-page report on Roberts, the terms ‘religious liberty’ and ‘religious freedom’ nowhere appear (save for a reference to a work by James Madison on religious liberty), but the term ‘establishment clause’ is mentioned 28 times and the term ‘church and state’ appears 23 times. The report focuses on protecting the rights of ‘religious minorities’ from ‘majoritarian’ influences (meriting 11 and 7 citations, respectively). People for the American Way has a similar emphasis, ending its report on this issue by saying we need constitutional protections for ‘Americans of minority faiths.’ Not to be outdone, the Alliance for Justice entitles its section on religion, ‘Lowering the Wall Between Church and State.’ In other words,

we need to shield the 15 percent of Americans who are not Christian from 'those' Christians.

"Their goal is to paint Roberts a fanatic because he does not share their fanatical interpretation of the First Amendment. Nice try."