

# **CLERGY 9/11 GAG RULE; BLOOMBERG INSULTS FAITHFUL**

Last month, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg banned the clergy from speaking at the 9/11 ceremony that commemorated the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack. In doing so, he angered people of all religions, and not just in New York. The Catholic League was proud to play a key role in leading the opposition.

Bloomberg first tried to say that the focus should be on the families who lost their loved ones. According to this logic, we pointed out, when the clergy are invited to speak at public events, or to open ceremonies with an invocation, they are detracting—not adding—to the overall theme. There is little doubt that if the families had been asked about the propriety of allowing the clergy to speak, most would have said yes.

Bloomberg then sounded foolish when he tried to argue that his censorial decision was made on separation of church and state grounds. This was pure bunk: never has the presence of the clergy at any public event been a problem.

Bloomberg is the same mayor who strongly promoted the building of a mosque near Ground Zero. He is also the same mayor who was entirely understanding of the move by American Atheists to sue New York City over the two steel beams shaped like a cross that were found in the debris of the Twin Towers disaster; the atheists objected when the cross was moved from St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church to its new home at the 9/11 Memorial Museum.

Almost everyone was critical of this mean-spirited gambit by American Atheists. Among those who could not summon the courage to condemn it was Mayor Bloomberg; without criticizing these activists on moral grounds, he simply affirmed their

constitutional right to sue. But he showed nothing but contempt for the constitutional rights of the clergy to speak at the 9/11 ceremony.

Our position was clear. We said that a priest, minister, rabbi and imam should be allowed to make a short statement. This nation was founded on Judeo-Christian principles, thus the rationale for the presence of the first three clergymen; the inclusion of an imam—to the exclusion of the clergy of other religions—could be justified, we said, on the basis of a goodwill gesture to the Muslim community.

Bill Donohue joined New York City Councilman Fernando Cabrera and others in a press conference protesting Bloomberg's gag rule. While the mayor got his way in the end, his reputation was damaged, and that's not something even this billionaire can control.

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## **SNAP AIMS AT POPE**

SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, assisted by the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR), has petitioned the International Criminal Court (ICC) to prosecute Pope Benedict XVI for allegedly covering up "crimes against humanity of rape and other sexual violence committed around the world." CCR attorney Pam Spees claims that "Crimes against tens of thousands of victims, most of them children, are being covered up by officials at the highest level of the Vatican."

As the Catholic League recently documented, SNAP does not exist to protect children; rather, its goal is to smear the Catholic Church. That it would team up with the most radical left-wing legal organization in the nation, CCR, is hardly surprising. After all, never once has CCR bothered to protest

the incredible assault on the due process rights of priests over the last decade. Indeed, it is mostly known for its attempts to undermine our national security.

It is a lie to say that sexual abuse is being covered up at the highest levels of the Vatican. The homosexual scandal took place during the sexual revolution, and most of the offenses ended a quarter-century ago. To charge otherwise is scurrilous. This proves, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that SNAP has become the professed enemy of the Catholic Church.

The Holy See is not a member of the ICC, making it difficult to prosecute. No matter, Bill Donohue fired off a letter, with documentation, to the ICC telling the truth about this matter. See p. 7 for an excerpt.

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# LYING ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK  
William Donohue

When someone gives the wrong information, and he quickly discovers his error, he often says, "Sorry about that. I lied. What I meant to say was...." He is wrong. No one can lie unless he knows the truth. Making a mistake of fact is not a lie—it is a mistake.

This has to be said because to charge someone with lying, we have to be confident that we know that the accused knew the truth, yet nonetheless decided to disregard it. This issue of Catalyst is rife with examples of lying, intentional falsehoods told about the Catholic Church.

It is a constitutional axiom that those accused of a crime are considered innocent until proven guilty. This means that those who publicly discuss cases involving the accused are ethically obliged to speak about allegations, and not treat accusations as matters of fact. Not to do so is to invite the reader to conclude that the accused has been tried and convicted. Here are a few recent examples.

The reason we charged the Wisconsin branch of SNAP with lying is because it ran an article on its website titled, "The Crimes of Monsignor William J. Lynn." But the Philadelphia priest has never been convicted of anything. In fact, the accompanying article even says that his case has yet to go to trial. Yet he is being publicly branded a criminal. Moreover, we contacted the officials in Wisconsin about this error, but to no avail. In other words, they knew the truth but decided to lie.

Surely Sr. Maureen Turlish, a Catholic dissident who heads the Philly chapter of Voice of the Faithful, knows that a grand jury has no power to convict anyone. Similarly, she must know that whatever is said about the accused in such hearings is proof of nothing. Yet she still chose the word "fact" to characterize what the Philadelphia grand juries have said about alleged clergy victims. Similarly, the National Catholic Reporter ran an editorial indicting the last three archbishops of Philadelphia for being complicit in crimes. Never did it say "alleged crimes." Yet they obviously knew that none of the three cardinals they smeared—John Krol, Anthony Bevilacqua and Justin Rigali—has ever been found guilty of jaywalking, never mind obstruction of justice.

Speaking of the National Catholic Reporter, it is an utter disgrace that this newspaper, which has a stable of writers ranging from dissidents to Catholic haters, is looked upon kindly by many who work in the dioceses, to say nothing of those who teach in Catholic colleges and universities. That this weekly has gone off the deep end in recent years is

indisputable, yet it still commands an audience, dwindling though its base is.

In the August 19 edition of the Reporter, it ran a short piece on Fr. Mychal Judge, the priest who was the first of the First Responders to die in the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York City. After he was killed, a few people who knew him said he was gay, while others who also knew him disagreed with this account. Importantly, no one ever said that the Franciscan priest publicly identified himself as a homosexual. If that were true, then everyone would have known about it.

The Reporter took the leap and wrote that "Judge was a Catholic priest who publicly acknowledged that he was a celibate gay man." After reading this, I asked our director of communications, Jeff Field, to contact the newspaper's editor, Tom Fox, asking for the evidence. Fox never replied to us, but in angry e-mails he sent to those who contacted him after receiving our statement, he made a lame attempt to defend himself: he cited Judge's "own handwritten journal entries," and private conversations about his gay status.

None of what Fox said addressed my complaint. We asked for evidence that the priest "publicly acknowledged" his gay status. Fox provided none because there is none. He should have apologized and issued a correction.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg first said there was no room for the clergy to speak at the 9/11 memorial ceremony because he didn't want to take away from the victims' families. But he didn't mind having Paul Simon and James Taylor strum their guitars, nor did he mind endless poetry readings. This was hardly the first time he allowed his personal predilections to dictate public policy, but it was one of his most offensive.

Bloomberg then developed a new defense, saying this was a constitutional issue and that separation of church and state

disallows the clergy from speaking at public events. This is a lie. The clergy have been speaking at these events for over two centuries, and he knows it. Then Bloomberg insulted most Americans when he said his clergy ban was done because “government shouldn’t be forcing” religion “down people’s throats.” But somehow it is okay for secularists like him to shove his beliefs down our throats!

As I said, it is one thing to make a mistake, quite another to lie. But it is a sign of our times that critics of the Church cannot settle for rational discourse, and that is because their goal is not to persuade, but to plunder.

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## **BLOOMBERG’S 9/11 GAG RULE INSULTS CATHOLICS**

Leading up to the events surrounding the tenth anniversary of 9/11, there was plenty of controversy surrounding New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s handling of the clergy. Indeed, the mayor wouldn’t allow them to speak at the memorial service.

In 2010, Mayor Bloomberg sought to justify his support for building a mosque near Ground Zero by recalling the bravery of the firefighters on that fateful day saying, “In rushing into those burning buildings, not one of them asked, ‘What God do you pray to?’” He added, “We do not honor their lives by denying the very constitutional rights they died protecting.”

If it was so convenient for Bloomberg to invoke the First Responders to justify his support for the mosque, what stopped him from honoring these brave policemen and firefighters on

9/11? Moreover, the first of the First Responders to die was Father Mychal Judge. He was not an anomaly: the vast majority of First Responders who died were Catholic. Yet both First Responders and the clergy were censored from the event. Thus, this was doubly insulting to Catholics.

The clergy gag rule was instituted to avoid “disagreements over which religious leaders participate.” But since when has this been an issue? Plenty of clergy, including an imam, spoke at an interfaith service at Yankee Stadium after the attacks, and they managed to pull it off without a problem. What made this time so different?

The difference this time is the mayor. “This cannot be political,” he intoned, yet it is the politicians—not the First Responders or the clergy—whom he invited to speak. Also, if President Obama was able to attend an interfaith prayer service at Washington National Cathedral on the evening of 9/11, why couldn’t Bloomberg allow a spot for a prayer?

Bloomberg said he didn’t want to “take away from the solemnity, if that’s the right word, of the occasion.” Yes, that was the right word. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it means “having a religious character.” Yet the mayor, perversely, wanted to secularize a solemn event.

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## **BLOOMBERG, SIKHS, MUSLIMS AND CATHOLICS**

Mayor Bloomberg recently signed into law the “Workplace Religious Freedom Act,” a bill designed to award new rights to Sikhs and Muslims. But when it came to showing sensitivity to Catholics in regards to the 9/11 ceremonies, the mayor showed

nothing but contempt.

Until Bloomberg signed the law, employers were required to make “reasonable accommodations” for the religious observances of their employees, a condition that could be overridden if the exceptions imposed minimal difficulties in the workplace, or added expenses. The new law raises the bar, mandating that employers prove that such accommodations would constitute a “significant difficulty or expense.”

What prompted the new law was pressure from Sikh and Muslim workers employed by the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA): they are required, like everyone else, to display an MTA logo on their headgear, which in their case means it must be shown on their religious headwear. Also, Sikhs complained that they cannot work for the New York Police Department unless they remove their turbans. The new law makes it easier for Sikhs and Muslims to sue the City of New York, claiming religious discrimination.

What is astounding about all of this is the blatant disparity in treatment: when it comes to Catholics—who comprised the vast majority of First Responders—they were told that there was no room for them at the 9/11 memorial ceremonies. And when it came to priests, as well as the clergy of all faiths, they were also told to take a hike.

We had but one request for Mayor Bloomberg: start treating Catholics the way he does Sikhs and Muslims. He could have started by repealing the 9/11 gag rule.

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# BLOOMBERG'S "LIAISON" BACKS 9/11 GAG RULE

It was nearly impossible to find anyone who supported New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg's gag rule censoring the clergy and First Responders from speaking at the 9/11 ceremonies. One exception was a woman who lost her husband in the attacks, and who was identified as a liaison between the mayor and the victims' families. Her name is Christy Ferer. But she is not exactly a go-between: she works for Bloomberg. Moreover, she used to date him.

"There are so many faiths that would have to be present," Ferer said leading up to the events. "How do you not insult somebody?" Better to insult everyone equally, she concluded. But not exactly: no group of New Yorkers was more insulted than Catholics.

Ferer's ties with her ex-boyfriend have paid dividends. Besides currently being a Special Assistant to Bloomberg, she previously served on the Advisory Council Board for the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and is past Commissioner of the Port Authority. She also served on the transition committee for Mayor-elect Bloomberg. Her husband who was killed on 9/11, Neil Levin, was also a longtime friend of Bloomberg, and a former director of the Port Authority.

Many members of victims' families have previously complained that Ferer does not reach out to them, and there is no evidence that she consulted with them regarding the propriety of censoring the clergy and First Responders from the 9/11 events. She said that she read their e-mails regarding the 9/11 ceremonies, but this is a poor substitute for dialogue.

We demanded to know the names of those whom Bloomberg and Ferer consulted with before the decision to ban the clergy

and First Responders was made.

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## **LEFT-WING PROTESTANTS JOIN 9/11 FRAY**

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg received oblique cover from left-wing Protestant leaders for his 9/11 clergy gag rule. While the leaders nominally disagreed with the mayor, they saved their real salvos for those who were critical of Bloomberg.

Tim King, the director of communications for the left-wing group, Sojourners, characterized Bloomberg's decision as "understandable but regrettable." His choice of words reflected his real interest in pinning the blame for the controversy on the mayor's critics. "And to those religious leaders who are stirring up a media controversy about this decision...you are showing exactly why Mayor Bloomberg didn't want you there in the first place."

In other words, the Mayor of the City of New York insulted hundreds of millions of Americans of all faiths by banning the clergy and First Responders from the 9/11 memorial ceremonies, and those who objected are responsible for "stirring up a media controversy." But when Sojourners held their press conference a couple days prior to the memorial ceremonies, somehow we were to believe that they were not adding to the controversy. Guess the peace-makers traveled to New York with their healing kit.

It was time for them to stop the lying. Those who blame the critics of religious intolerance for "stirring up a media

controversy” took the side of those who promote it. With its statement, Sojourners laid anchor with Bloomberg.

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## **NYT SPINS 9/11 CLERGY GAG RULE**

It is no secret that the New York Times is the most secular major newspaper in the United States, nor is it a secret that Mayor Bloomberg is a thoroughgoing secularist, so it was hardly surprising that the Times would find a secularist to explain Bloomberg’s 9/11 clergy gag rule.

Alan Wolfe is an atheist who directs the Center for Religion and Public Life at Boston College, a Jesuit-run institution, and it is his belief that America has changed drastically—almost unrecognizably—over the past ten years. We went from a unified culture to “complete Balkanization” he recently argued. This allowed the Times to conclude, “Ten years later, any consensus that existed about the appropriate role of religion in public ceremonies marking a monumental American trauma has fallen apart.”

If this tale was to be believed, then there should have been plenty of evidence showing how the American people no longer want a role for religious expression at public events. But, of course, there wasn’t. So why make it up? To convince the reader that Bloomberg’s censorial act is a better index of our culture today than the sentiments of his critics.

To understand what has changed, all we had to do was look at who is in charge. After the Twin Towers were hit, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani called New York Archbishop Edward Egan for assistance, sending a police car to get him. The next day,

Giuliani said, "The only thing we can do now is remain calm and focus on the rescue efforts...and pray."

Bloomberg would have none of it. Indeed, even when he speaks about prayer, he sounds foolish. During the week before the 9/11 anniversary, Bloomberg appeared on "The View," and said we need to remember that "there are people who don't want us to say what we want to say, and, uh, pray the way we want to pray and all that sort of stuff." [Our emphasis.]

The big change is not our culture—it's the mayor.

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## **IRELAND LIES ABOUT THE HOLY SEE**

Over the summer, Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny accused the Holy See of meddling in Irish affairs, citing the recently published Cloyne Report (an Irish government document on priestly sexual abuse in the Diocese of Cloyne) as evidence; he also said that attempts by the Holy See to "frustrate" the Irish inquiry occurred "as little as three years ago."

All of this was a lie: there was no interference; the Cloyne Report never made such an accusation; and nothing has happened in the last three years to warrant these charges.

To be sure, there were points of contention between what the Irish government requested and what the Holy See thought judicious. At most, this constituted uncooperativeness; it is a lie to say it merits the accusation of "interference." Also, anyone who can read knows that the Cloyne Report never even suggested that the Holy See sought to meddle in Irish affairs.

Lastly, when Kenny was asked to provide evidence of attempts by the Holy See to “frustrate” the inquiry in the past three years, the best he could do was to assert that his remark was based on “anger and frustration.” So that gave him the right to lie about the Holy See?

The fact of the matter is that the Irish government lagged behind efforts by the Catholic Church to remedy sexual abuse, and the Holy See’s response to the Irish government made that clear. In 2008, the Church’s Elliott Report took the Diocese of Cloyne to task for not following the 1996 guidelines for sex abuse cases that were issued by the Irish Bishops. Indeed, while the Irish government was still debating what to do about mandatory reporting of these crimes, the Catholic Church already had its guidelines in place. Had Bishop John Magee followed them in Cloyne (and had he followed canon law), things would have been different.

The Irish made much of a 1997 letter by the Apostolic Nuncio in Ireland seeming to weaken the 1996 guidelines, but the Holy See effectively rebutted that interpretation. Besides, only one clear case of abuse in Cloyne was recorded after the letter appeared.

The best analysis of this situation was made by Canadian priest Father Raymond de Souza. In his article on the website of First Things, Father de Souza said, “Mr. Kenny’s speech was only secondarily about protecting children. It was primarily about the role of the Catholic Church in Irish society. It also sought to deflect attention from the failings of the Irish State. It was a hostile act, and the Holy See was right to respond firmly.” He ended his article by stating that the frustration in Ireland is understandable, and that it would be “convenient if the whole stinking mess could be dropped in the lap of Rome.” But that wouldn’t make it right, he said.

In short, the Irish need to take a breath and hit the reset button before they get themselves in any deeper.

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# ARCHBISHOP CHAPUT ALREADY DRAWING FLAK

On September 8, Archbishop Charles Chaput was installed as the leader of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Not even a week went by before he began receiving flak from dissidents.

On the day of Archbishop Chaput's installation, Robert Hoatson was protesting the event outside the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul. The Philadelphia Inquirer ran a picture of him on its website, and identified him in the newspaper as a priest. What they did not say is that he is a suspended priest from New Jersey who filed a lawsuit against the Catholic Church asking to be removed from the clergy. Predictably, Chaput's homily that day was attacked by victims' groups and dissidents for not being sufficiently contrite about the fate of alleged victims in the archdiocese.

As soon as Chaput's appointment was announced in July, the phony victims' group, SNAP, held a press conference condemning him. Sister Maureen Turlish, who leads the local Church-bashing group, Voice of the Faithful, lectured him on how to proceed. Another group of malcontents, Catholics4Change, demanded that they "become part of Church leadership." But wouldn't that make them part of the dreaded "institutional Church" they so deplore?

These people also lie. Turlish, for instance, is fond of saying that the two Philadelphia grand jury reports on the archdiocese document "facts." Similarly, a recent editorial in the dissident weekly, the National Catholic Reporter, condemned the last three Philly archbishops for being "complicit in hiding crimes and criminals." Specifically, it

said the archdiocese "is a place where children, mostly boys, have been raped and molested, in some cases repeatedly." It did not use the word "allegedly," accepting as "fact" accusations that have never been challenged in court!

What was really driving the early animus against Chaput is his persona: he is bright, courageous and orthodox. That is why Catholic professors like Nicholas Cafardi and David J. O'Brien were busy telling him not to address wider moral issues, especially in the upcoming presidential season. Fat chance. Guess they don't know his steeliness.