

# **The Catholic League's position on Kiryas Joel**

The Catholic League formally supports the establishment of a special school district in New York State to accommodate the Hasidic community of Kiryas Joel in its efforts to educate its handicapped children. Importantly, the school district does not preclude educating children of other faiths and does not allow for the teaching of any religion. And though it is not easy to see whose rights would be lost if the Hasidim win, it is clear that if the state wins its case, Hasidic children will lose.

The Catholic League's position is shared by the Archdiocese of New York. Cardinal John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, and Msgr. Thomas J. Bergin, Chancellor and Vicar for Education, have both addressed the importance of this case. If the ruling, which is expected in late Spring, is favorable to the Hasidim, it would, according to Cardinal O'Connor, be a "landmark decision with very significant implications for the Catholic Church." To Msgr. Bergin, a favorable decision, "will open doors for all sort of possibilities," many of which would bear on parochial schools.

Government has an obligation to accommodate as many religious and ethnic groups as is compatible with a concomitant respect for the constitutional rights of others. Indeed, a reasonable allowance for pluralism is central to liberty. This is one, though hardly the only, principle at stake in this case, and it is one that men and women of all faiths and ancestral backgrounds should support.