

USE RICO AGAINST ACT-UP

ACT-UP has pledged to demonstrate on Easter Sunday outside the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and is contemplating an invasion of the sanctuary during Mass. ACTUP has targeted the Washington church because Cardinal James Hickey is scheduled to say Mass there on Sunday. Cardinal Hickey recently criticized comments made by Dr. Joycelyn Elders, the Surgeon General, in the gay magazine, the Advocate. Responding to ACT-UP's pledge, Dr. William A. Donohue, president of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, made one of his own.

"If ACT-UP invades the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Easter Sunday, the Catholic League will do everything it can to use the full force of the law against these gay terrorists. Invading houses of worship is what Nazis do, and there is literally no difference between busting into a service in a synagogue and busting into a Roman Catholic church during a Mass. Both are equally despicable acts of terrorism.

"In the event the invasion takes place, the Catholic League will immediately seek a plaintiff for a challenge in court. If RICO (the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act) can be used against anti-abortion demonstrators, then surely it can be used against church-busters. Justice demands that those who bully people exercising their First Amendment right to freedom of religion pay a high price for their conduct.

"Furthermore, the Catholic League endorses the remarks made by Cardinal Hickey in a letter he wrote to President Clinton regarding the objectionable statements that Dr. Elders made in her interview in the March 22nd issue of the Advocate. Dr. Elders' crude characterization of those whose religious faith she disagrees with, along with her reckless comments on homosexuality, leave much for Cardinal Hickey to dispute. But

even if we were not in agreement with the Cardinal, that would hardly excuse the threats of ACT -UP spokesman Wayne Turner.

“What ACT-UP is threatening has nothing to do with civil disobedience: it is terrorism, pure and simple. We hope that reason prevails and the contemplated invasion is scratched. If not, the Catholic League will act quickly and decisively against the terrorists.”

The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights is the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. It defends the right of Catholics—lay and clergy alike—to participate in American life without defamation or discrimination.