

# VICTORY IN MARYLAND SCHOOL

This spring we learned that officials at Hyattsville Middle School in Hyattsville, Maryland prohibited students from wearing rosaries. In a memo to parents, it said, "In our training about gangs, we have been informed that wearing rosaries as jewelry often is a gang symbol."

What bothered us was not a legitimate concern about gangs hijacking religious symbols. What got our goat was a statement which said, "Our country is built on the premise of the separation of church and state. Therefore, we are asking that our students refrain from wearing rosaries or other items such as bandanas that might be associated with gangs."

In a letter to the CEO of Prince George's County Public Schools, William Donohue wrote:

"There are several problems here, including constitutional ones. As I've indicated, there is nothing wrong with a school that decides to ban religious symbols that are being worn for the purpose of conveying a gang message (as opposed to religious expression). But when separation of church and state is invoked, it suggests that all religious symbols are prohibited. Would this mean that Christians cannot wear a cross, and that Jews cannot wear a Star of David? And why, if the First Amendment provision regarding church and state is being invoked, does it make sense to lump rosaries (a religious symbol) with bandanas (a secular symbol)?"

Donohue implored Dr. André J. Hornsby to intervene in this matter. "Go ahead and ban religious symbols that are being abused by gangs to get their message across," Donohue said, "but don't condition this edict on the grounds of separation of church and state. That is casting the net too wide, needlessly making this an issue of constitutional law."

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Donohue saying that an apology has been given by the principal. Moreover, a series of steps has been taken to assure that nothing like this ever happens again.

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