

APA OFFERS BIASED LOOK AT CHURCH

The *APA Monitor*, the newsletter of the American Psychological Association, recently offered a biased look at the Catholic Church, necessitating a Catholic League response. The following letter explains the league's position. We are grateful to psychologist Patricia Donoghue for bringing this issue to our attention.

"The August edition of the *APA Monitor* had two articles on sexual abuse among the clergy. Of particular interest to the writer, Tori DeAngelis, is the relationship between the Catholic Church's celibacy requirement and sexual abuse.

"For whatever reason, there is much in the article that DeAngelis did not discuss. It should be known that the most authoritative book on the subject, *Pedophiles and Priests*, by Philip Jenkins (Oxford, 1996), shows that the rate of pedophilia among Catholic priests runs between .7 and 1.2 percent of the clergy. This contrasts with a figure of 2-3 percent in the non-celibate Protestant clergy. It is striking, then, that DeAngelis not only fails to discuss how celibacy could be seen as a causative agent, but, more importantly, that she gives the reader the impression that this problem is somehow more pervasive among the Catholic clergy.

"Then we read statements like 'The fact that the Catholic church has done a poor job educating seminarians about how to cope with sexual feelings....' We also read conclusions about 'the church's propensity to avoid sexual matters.' Such comments demand evidence. It is one thing for tabloids to make these charges, quite another when a serious newsletter entertains them. If the point is that Catholic sexual ethics differs markedly from the prevailing ethos,

then that's fine: it does. But if the point is to indict, then that's another matter altogether.

"It is also remarkable that in a discussion of preventative programs in the ranks of the clergy, nothing is said about the efforts that have been made—especially in the 1990s—in the Catholic community.

"All totaled, DeAngelis offers a picture that is neither accurate nor fair."