

Appeals Court overturns pro-life priest's conviction

The Massachusetts Court of Appeals has overturned the conviction of Rev. Thomas Carleton on the basis of improper jury selection. The court found that the Massachusetts Attorney-General's office, which prosecuted the case, had excluded jurors with Irish or Italian surnames because they might have been Catholic.

Father Carleton, a member of Operation Rescue, had been tried for his participation in an abortuary protest.

Catholic League officials hailed his victory and blasted the Attorney General's office for discrimination.

Catholic League Operations Director C. J. Doyle stated, "Attorney General L. Scott Harsbarger's office engaged in ethnic and religious discrimination against Catholics in order to secure a favorable verdict in a controversial case. Such conduct, which creates a religious test for jury service, is illegal and unconstitutional. Following the attempt to prevent Father Carleton from wearing clerical garb, or being addressed as "Father," in court, it suggests a pattern of hostility to the civil and religious rights of Catholics. It remains an outrageous double standard that Attorney General Harshbarger prosecutes members of Operation Rescue, who engage in non-violent civil disobedience, to the fullest extent of the law, while refusing to prosecute members of the militant homosexual group ACT-UP, who commit hate crimes, attempt to disrupt church services, and violate the constitutional rights of Catholics."