

CATHOLIC BASHERS GO BONKERS OVER SCANDAL

Catholic bashers are coming out of the woodwork over the sexual abuse scandal in the Church. Catholics for a Free Choice, American Atheists and Rainbow Sash have all been ringing the alarms beckoning world bodies to investigate the Church. Even some noted attorneys have jumped on board.

The Catholic League has been keeping a close watch on those attorneys involved in prosecuting sexual abuse cases. Just as no attorney who is prosecuting cases of sexual abuse by Catholic priests should immediately be declared suspect, none should escape examination himself. We have found that, by and large, attorneys involved in these cases have acted professionally and harbor no agenda. But we were troubled when we learned that sex abuse-victim attorney Jeffrey R. Anderson appeared at a press conference hosted by an anti-Catholic group.

The most mainstream of all anti-Catholic organizations in the nation is Catholics for a Free Choice. Its president, Frances Kissling, has long been obsessed with attacking the Catholic Church in every way possible. On May 8, she held a press conference in New York City demanding that the United Nations involve itself in the Church scandal. This was hardly newsworthy—Kissling has been pressing to downgrade the Holy See's U.N. status as a permanent observer for the past several years—but it did mark something disturbing when the most prolific litigant against the Church stood side-by-side with her. Anderson has handled more than 500 cases against the Church, more than any other attorney.

We were wary of Anderson even before this event.

He has a penchant for casting wide nets and for dabbling in conspiracy theories. For example, unlike other lawyers involved in these cases, Anderson has resorted to the widely discredited RICO law to sue the Vatican and Pope John Paul II, as well as several dioceses. Indeed, his fascination with the Vatican antedates the current scandal: in 1993 he publicly denounced the late Pope Paul VI for being legally responsible for the behavior of a sex-abusing priest, James Porter, simply because Porter admitted his conduct to the pope.

For these reasons, we are suspect about the motives and behavior of Jeffrey R. Anderson.

American Atheists also want to cast a big net. They issued a news release calling on the federal, state and local authorities to investigate the Catholic Church. They want the RICO law to be invoked as well. In a particularly vicious letter printed in the Chicago Sun-Times, Larry Darby, the Alabama state director of American Atheists, branded the Church a "totalitarian church-state government."

Rainbow Sash is a national organization of mostly gay Catholics. On May 10, they called upon the U.S. Justice Department to appoint a Special Prosecutor to determine if any federal laws have been broken by the Catholic Church.

None of these organizations received big coverage by the media. Most in the media are aware that these groups have an agenda and are only too quick to exploit the press for their own self-serving cause. Nonetheless, their behavior deserves to be monitored and that is exactly what the Catholic League has been doing.