

Church Robber Indicted on Civil Rights Charge

Following calls from the Catholic League for a civil rights prosecution, church robber David Cedenó has been indicted by an Essex County, Massachusetts, grand jury for constitutional rights violations and two other hate crimes. Cedenó and an accomplice robbed St. Mary's Church in Lawrence, Massachusetts on June 10th, brazenly stealing two chalices and a communion paten from the altar during Mass, and desecrating the Blessed Sacrament, which was spilled onto the floor of the sanctuary.

In a letter to Essex County District Attorney Kevin Burke, Daniel T. Flatly, President of the League's Massachusetts Chapter, called Cedenó's act "an outrageous and unprecedented crime," and asked that he seek the maximum penalties allowed by law. The League demanded that Cedenó be charged not just with larceny and disturbing an assembly of worship, but with violating the constitutional rights of worshippers.

On July 20th, David Cedenó was indicted for larceny, disturbing an assembly of worship, constitutional rights violations, and destruction of religious property. The last three charges are hate crimes under Massachusetts law.

Cedenó, who is 17, will be tried as an adult in the Superior Court of Essex County. Assistant District Attorney Jane Hegarty, chief of the District Attorney's Civil Rights Division, will prosecute the case which has received wide publicity.