

CHURCH-SUING LAWYERS DESERVE MONITORING

Catholic League president William Donohue explained today why the league is monitoring attorneys involved in prosecuting cases of priestly sexual abuse:

“Just as no attorney who is prosecuting cases of sexual abuse by Catholic priests should immediately be declared suspect, none should escape examination himself. The Catholic League has found that, by and large, attorneys involved in these cases have acted professionally and harbor no agenda. But what happened today gives us pause: 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. Today she held a press conference in New York City demanding that the United Nations involve itself in the Church scandal. This is 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 does mark something disturbing when the most prolific litigant against the Church stands side-by-side with her. Anderson has handled more than 500 cases against the Church, more than any other attorney.

“This is not the only reason the Catholic League is wary of Anderson. 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, the Catholic League is suspect about the motives and behavior of Jeffrey R. Anderson.”