

# CONFESSION CASE ON APPEAL

The Catholic League, along with many other Catholic organizations, has joined the amicus curiae brief prepared by Catholic Action for Faith and Family that seeks to protect the seal of Confession. The case could reach the U.S. Supreme Court.

The State Supreme Court of Louisiana ruled in July that Father Jeff Bayhi may be compelled to testify whether he was told in Confession about the abuse of a 14-year-old in 2008. The Baton Rouge Diocese quickly condemned this ruling, as did the Catholic League. The diocese then filed a lawsuit prepared by the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

At issue is whether the courts can determine what is a valid religious practice. Catholics hold that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is contingent on absolute confidentiality and that the seal of Confession cannot be compromised.

What is pernicious about this case is the Louisiana Supreme Court's decision that a priest's mandatory reporting obligation may turn not on what the Catholic Church teaches, but on what a jury may decide. In other words, what is at stake is whether the state, via an empanelled jury, can rule on which religious beliefs and practices qualify for constitutional protection.

This is just one more example of the growing contempt for religious liberty as exercised by agents of government. Keeping the state from encroaching on the rights of religious institutions is what the Framers sought, yet in today's society this verity must now be fought tooth and nail.