

COURTROOM BIGOTRY EXPLODES: MICHIGAN GRIEVANCE FILED

On March 3, the Catholic League filed a formal complaint with the Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission regarding anti-Catholic comments made by defense attorney Henry Scharg.

In a Wayne County Circuit Court hearing concerning a woman charged with smothering her newborn daughter to death, her attorney, Henry Scharg, sought repeatedly to malign trial judge Dan Ryan, accusing him of allowing his Catholic religion to color his judgment in the case. Not only did Scharg call into question Ryan's affiliation with Ave Maria Law School, he sought to remove the judge from the case.

What happened on March 1 was unbelievable. Scharg was angered over the fact that Ryan was taking vacation time to teach at Ave Maria on Mondays (the fact that Ryan rearranged his Monday schedule to accommodate Scharg undercut his complaint). In any event, on p. 10 of the transcript from the hearing, Scharg is quoted as saying, "This is the equivalent to an African-American man being on trial and the judge taking Mondays off to attend Klan meetings."

Bill Donohue issued the following statement to the media: "Scharg has no business representing anyone. To compare an accredited Catholic law school to a racist terrorist organization is more than despicable—it constitutes rank anti-Catholic bigotry. Indeed, this remark is so egregious as to warrant severe punitive sanctions, if not disbarment. We will do what we can to see that justice is done."

Justice, we decided, could only be served by lodging a complaint with the Attorney Grievance Commission of the State of Michigan. It is not the Catholic League's role to determine, or even recommend, a suitable punishment. All we

can do is formally ask for an investigation of this matter, which we did.

What angered us as much as anything was the attempt by Scharg to force the removal of the judge. Judge Ryan, of course, did nothing wrong. Scharg was the one who discredited himself before the court with his flagrant anti-Catholic bigotry. When we went to press, there were no reported bigoted outbursts by Scharg in the courtroom. At the very least, we hope our complaint had a chastening effect on him.

Someone on our side gave us a tip about this incident. We are happy he did. But we are not happy with the silence of the Michigan media. Had an anti-Semitic or racist remark been made in court, it's a sure bet it would have been covered. Nonetheless, if justice is to be served—and it could take six months—it will come from the government, not the media.