

FLORIDA AND MARYLAND TARGET CONFESSIONAL SEAL

Legislators in Florida and Maryland are following the lead of Kentucky and New Hampshire by targeting the confessional seal. In an attempt to deal with child sexual molestation, legislators in these states are considering bills that would end the priest-penitent privilege: if passed, it would mean priests would have to report knowledge of abuse learned in the confessional to the authorities.

Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

“Lawmakers in Kentucky and New Hampshire are currently rethinking the wisdom of violating the sanctity of the confessional. Florida and Maryland should do likewise. It is simply a red herring to maintain that children cannot be protected unless the seal of the confessional is broken: there is no evidence to suggest that the problem of sexual abuse could be checked if the priest-penitent privilege were to end.

“Cardinal Theodore McCarrick has courageously said that if the Maryland bill passes, he will instruct all priests in the Archdiocese of Washington to ignore it. Indeed, he has said that he will gladly practice civil disobedience and go to jail. The Catholic League is certain that Cardinal McCarrick means what he says and we commend him for his uncompromising stand.

“I am writing today to every legislator in Florida and Maryland asking that no bill be passed that violates the seal of the confessional. Crime of any sort can be effectively dealt with without attacking the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Those who maintain otherwise carry a big burden: they must demonstrate that unless the confidentiality of the

confessional is compromised, the state cannot protect minors. This is an absurd position that cannot stand either legal or logical scrutiny."