

# FORMER U.S. ATTORNEY INDICTS PRIESTS

Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments on remarks made by David Hickton:

Whenever someone generalizes from the individual to the collective (of a negative nature)—making sweeping statements indicting an entire class of people—it is rightly condemned. Well, not always. This is certainly true of most races, religions, ethnic groups, and sexual orientations, but it is definitely not true of Catholic priests.

On the November 29 edition of the Fox News show, “The Story with Martha MacCallum,” former U.S. Attorney David Hickton spoke about his experiences at a Pittsburgh suburban Catholic elementary school (he wrote about this subject earlier in the day in *USA Today*). He said there were members of the basketball team who were abused by the coach.

Hickton didn’t stop by commenting on the offending coach. He said that “I don’t think my experience is that much different than many people who went to Catholic school.”

This is a remarkable statement. Was Hickton abused? No, he says he was not. On what basis does he make such a sweeping generalization? He has never done a study of this issue and cannot point to one that would substantiate his claim. One would think that a man of his stature—he is the director and founder of the University of Pittsburgh’s Institute for Cyber Law, Policy and Security—would choose his words more carefully.

I went to Catholic elementary school and a Catholic high school (a boarding school), and not only was I never abused, I never knew of one boy who was. I would bet anything that my experience is more common than the one Hickton describes.

On what basis do I make such a judgment? The John Jay study on this issue found that between 1950 and 2002, 4 percent of the priests had an accusation made against them, roughly half of which were ever substantiated. Moreover, out of 100,000 active priests during this half-century, 149 priests out of every 750 accounted for more than one-quarter of all the allegations. That's why most Catholic guys never even heard about sexual abuse growing up—it was a rarity.

A few months ago I talked about this issue with Pittsburgh radio talk-show host John Steigerwald. He admitted on the air that he was the subject of a barrage of criticism for saying that he never heard of any cases of sexual abuse during his years in Catholic schools.

Why would Steigerwald get blasted for saying that? Think about it. Imagine a black person getting blasted for saying he never heard of a crime victim growing up. What kind of person would say that?

Hickton may be sincere in his desire for Church reforms, but he has regrettably contributed to the lousy stereotype that priests labor under these days.