

# HIGH COURT UPHOLDS PRISONERS' RIGHTS

On May 31, in a unanimous decision, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the religious liberty rights of prisoners.

The Catholic League frequently receives complaints from Catholic prisoners who maintain that their religious-liberty rights have been violated. We probe each case separately seeking to verify the authenticity of the complaint. In some cases, we have been successful in restoring rights that have been abridged. In other cases, we have determined that the complaint is without merit. And there are times when we have not been able to decide whether it is the inmate or the warden who is spinning the truth.

In any event, we applauded this decision by the Supreme Court, not simply because it underscores prisoners' First Amendment rights, but because it sustains a larger issue—the issue of religious liberty in general.

In this ruling, the high court overturned the Sixth Circuit's decision to nix the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA). This law is an important piece of federal legislation designed to protect religious rights from being invalidated by a distorted interpretation of the so-called establishment clause of the First Amendment.

By overturning the Sixth Circuit's decision, the high court rejected the notion that RLUIPA gives religious prisoners "a preferred status in the prison community." It does nothing of the sort—it merely secures their right to religious liberty.