

INDIANAPOLIS STAR INFLAMES CATHOLICS

Beginning February 16, the *Indianapolis Star* ran a three-part series on sexual misconduct among priests in the Lafayette Diocese. Though some of the reporting was professional, and an editorial on the subject was reasonable, there were elements to the story that justifiably inflamed area Catholics, and none more than Bishop William Higi.

The way the story began was the first clue that sensationalism was at work: "In the heart of Indiana lies a Roman Catholic diocese tainted by priestly sins, dark secrets of lust and betrayal that have wounded scores of victims." That is the kind of bombast worthy of tabloid journalism, the kind found next to the checkout counter of your local supermarket. It was that sort of thing that the league protested.

Bishop Higi scored some real points in his letter to the editor of February 23. He properly took the offensive by saying that just as the *Star* takes pains to protect the privacy of persons whom the newspaper believes are victims, so, too, does his diocese refuse disclosure of those found to be victims. Not shying away from the question of privacy for offenders, Bishop Higi drew a distinction between a cover-up and an honest attempt to maintain privacy rights.

What angered the league most was what angered Bishop Higi most, namely, the tawdry sensationalism that marred the story. He said that when he first learned that a series would be done on clergy sexual misconduct in his diocese, he "never imagined the kind of graphic headlines, distasteful illustrations and lurid details that have been featured in these articles."

Perhaps what was most strange about the story was the fact that there are no current cases of abuse in the Lafayette

diocese. Not one. So if there is no on-going problem in the diocese, what motivated The Star to write an on-going story about events that happened (in some instances) before the reporters were born?