

JUDGE OKAYS SUIT AGAINST VATICAN

Catholic League president Bill Donohue commented today about a judge who allowed a lawsuit against the Vatican to move forward:

“The same judge, John G. Heyburn II, who ruled on October 7, 2005 that the Holy See is a foreign state that enjoys certain immunities now says that the same lawsuit can go forward. That’s because a few technicalities that stopped him from initially dismissing the suit altogether are no longer relevant. There’s an odor to this and it stinks.

“The lawyer, William McMurry, won a \$25.7 million settlement with the Archdiocese of Louisville in 2003 and managed to cream \$10.3 million off the top for himself and his legal team. What motivated him to continue his pursuit was the revelation in 2003 that a 1962 Vatican document, leaked to the press, allegedly shows how the Vatican planned to cover up cases of sexual abuse. But the document, as we’ve pointed out many times before, not only does not implicate the Vatican—it proves how serious it took cases of alleged abuse. For example, it prescribed penalties for any priest who ‘whether by words or signs or *nods of the head*’ might convey a sexual advance in the confessional. (My italics.) It also prescribed penalties for the penitent if he or she didn’t report such conduct. In other words, the 1962 document is a model of excellence.

“Besides, accusing the Vatican is bogus. ‘I have reviewed thousands of pages of documents surrendered by the Archdiocese of Boston,’ said victims’ attorney Roderick MacLeish Jr., ‘but haven’t seen a scintilla of evidence showing the Vatican knew what was going on.’ None of this matters to McMurry, whose anger at the Vatican involves his once being denied entrance

to St. Peter's Basilica because he was wearing shorts.

"McMurry's clients are Michael Turner, James H. O'Bryan and Donald E. Poppe. Turner alleges that over three decades ago he was molested by a priest; last year he said he 'thought' the local bishop was following Vatican orders dealing with his case. O'Bryan says a priest touched him through his pants pocket in 1928, and Poppe's alleged molester died in 1983. This is what we've come to—a free-for-all against the Catholic Church."