

JUSTICE IN OKLAHOMA

An inappropriate joke about a Catholic priest is told at a function sponsored by the state of Oklahoma. A Catholic layman in attendance objects. Nothing is done. He contacts the Catholic League. An apology is forthcoming. Here's what happened.

At a "Partnership Series" substance abuse workshop, an instructor opened his seminar by telling an offensive joke about a Catholic priest who consumes alcohol and engages in sex. When a Catholic complained to the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, he got nowhere. He was told the matter would be investigated. When that didn't happen, he contacted us.

William Donohue wrote to the commissioner of this department, Dr. Terry Cline, lodging a complaint. He said he was troubled that "a presenter at a state seminar who identified himself as a representative of the state of Oklahoma, the U.S. military and the Episcopal Church would tell a bigoted joke." Donohue also mentioned that the complainant got no satisfaction from Cline's office despite assurances he would.

Dr. Cline wrote to Dr. Donohue extending an apology for what happened. He also enclosed a letter of apology written by the offending instructor to the person who complained. As a result of this incident, Dr. Cline said "it is our intent to highlight the importance of cultural and religious sensitivity in all presentations through our letter of agreement with speakers."