

KANSAS CITY STAR SEX SURVEY GETS FAILING GRADE

The recent sex survey of Roman Catholic priests by the *Kansas City Star* has just been analyzed by two leading statisticians: David Murray, research director at the Statistical Assessment Service and S. Robert Lichter, president of the Center for Media and Public Affairs. They have independently posted their review of the survey at newswatch.org.

They said that “few survey researchers would consider a 27 percent response rate to be ‘very good,’” adding that in such instances “follow-up surveys” are typically conducted; this was not the case.

They also concluded that the survey’s margin of error of 3.5 percent was a “boilerplate description of sampling error.” They made this charge because it is not known whether “the minority who responded were unusually concerned about AIDS, differentially open to questions of personal sexuality, or even more likely to have a homosexual orientation than the 2,212 non-respondents.”

The survey’s most sensationalistic conclusion—that AIDS-related deaths among priests is about 4 times the general population rate—was also the source of Murray and Lichter’s harshest assessment: the survey compared priests to the general population, which includes women and children, and therefore offered a skewed comparison. When the rate of AIDS-related deaths among priests is contrasted with the rate among adult males, the difference disappears—they have the same rate!

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“Murray and Lichter’s analysis of the *Kansas City Star* data

demonstrates the unscientific nature of the sex survey. When coupled with the obvious political agenda of the survey, the only unqualified conclusion that can be drawn is that the *Kansas City Star* deserves the Maria Monk award for fabricating stories that demonize the Catholic Church.”