

KC STAR'S ROGUE REPORTER

☒ Catholic League president Bill Donohue comments as follows:

Responsible newspapers never run stories about alleged wrongdoing unless they can be corroborated. The *Kansas City Star* not only runs them, it gave Judy Thomas a three-part series on alleged priestly sexual abuse that took place 30 years ago. Sunday's first story begins with a statement that is patently false: "Four Young Lives, Innocence Lost." Wrong. Two of the alleged victims are dead, one says it never happened, and the priest denies the charges. In short, there is no story here, unless one uncorroborated account is sufficient to smear.

Thomas' entire soap-opera yarn concerns the allegations of Jon David Couzens. He says that a priest molested him and three other altar boys back in the early 1980s. But why should we believe a man who only now is coming forward with his tale—he never told a single soul—especially given the fact that he has been implicated in a murder? Thomas never told readers that on the night Mark Trader was murdered about a dozen years ago, Couzens got into a fight with him over a botched drug deal, and although another man was convicted, on appeal it was alleged that Couzens and two other men had "motive to commit the murder and the opportunity to do so." This is public record, so why the cover up?

Thomas would rather believe Couzens than the fourth altar boy who says none of the abuse ever happened (she will not disclose his name and did not respond to our request to do so). Moreover, at least one person who goes to the same Baptist church as Couzens says he is a notorious anti-Catholic bigot. Just the kind Thomas prefers.

One of the boys who is dead was killed with a 20-gauge shotgun (another later died in an accident). Two of the youths said

this boy was doing fine at the time of the alleged suicide (which was two years after he was supposedly abused), but as usual Couzens has a different account. For Thomas, however, his damning story is the most credible.

Judy Thomas and the *Star* deserve each other.

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