

# League Hails Massachusetts High Court Decision on Pro-life Priest

The Catholic League on Nov. 11 hailed the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in the case of Father Thomas Carleton, an Operation Rescue priest convicted for blockading an abortion clinic. The court upheld a Feb. 28 decision by the Massachusetts Court of Appeals overturning Father Carleton's conviction due to improper jury selection. The appeals court found that the Massachusetts attorney general's office, which prosecuted the case, had excluded jurors based on the Irish ethnicity of their surnames.

The Catholic League called the Supreme Judicial Court's decision "A victory for fair play," and "a repudiation of the bigoted and unethical tactics employed by the attorney general's office in this case."

Catholic League Operations Director C.J. Doyle stated:

"Attorney General L. Scott Harshbarger's office engaged in ethnic and religious discrimination against Catholics to secure a favorable verdict in a controversial case. Such conduct, which creates a religious test for jury service, is illegal and unconstitutional.

"The exclusion of Irish-American jurors, which followed attempts to prevent Father Carleton from wearing clerical garb or being addressed as 'Father' in court, suggests both anti-Catholic bias and hostility to the civil rights of Catholics by the attorney general's office."