

LONG ISLAND JUDGE OVERSTEPS HIS AUTHORITY

At yesterday's sentencing of a Catholic priest convicted of sexual abuse, Nassau County Judge Donald DeRiggi said, "The Catholic Church is so vehement in its stand against fornication and homosexuality and adultery, how someone in the church can violate those things is hard to understand." DeRiggi, a Catholic, added that priests who can't keep their vow of celibacy should leave. He also raised questions about celibacy itself: "Maybe the assumptions we have about priests have to be reevaluated."

Here's what Catholic League president William Donohue had to say about DeRiggi's remarks:

"Maybe the assumptions we have about judges have to be reevaluated. After all, I did not think it was the job of a judge to pontificate from the bench about the wisdom of the Catholic Church's teachings. Not only was DeRiggi out of bounds by making these comments, he also showed his ignorance. It obviously came as a blockbuster surprise for DeRiggi to learn that the same religion that teaches against sin has sinners in its own ranks, including its teachers. Just wait until someone tells him the pope goes to confession. He'll no doubt want the person to undergo a lie detector test.

"Whether the discipline of celibacy should be revoked or reinforced is something for the Magisterium to decide. But it is not a matter for a sitting judge to lecture on from the bench. For his penance, I suggest DeRiggi reevaluate his vocation."