

NO PRIEST IS SAFE

Four recent news stories, covering priests in Baltimore, Philadelphia, St. Paul and Chicago, make it clear that no Catholic priest is safe. Anyone can accuse a priest of molestation, no matter how long ago, and get away with it.

Father Michael Kolodziej, who is a former Minister Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual, was suspended last month from all public ministries by the Franciscans. Furthermore, the Archdiocese of Baltimore withdrew his faculties so that he can no longer serve as a priest.

Sounds as if the priest must have been convicted of something serious. In fact, Father Kolodziej has not been found guilty of anything. His accuser says he was abused by the priest while they were wrestling at Baltimore's Archbishop Curley High School in the mid-to-late 1970s. That's it.

So here we have the spectacle of a 69-year-old priest being subjected to public embarrassment about groping a teenager in front of spectators several decades ago. Sexual abuse, like most crimes, is done in private—not in front of an audience. And victims don't sit on it, pondering what to do for 35 years. But when it comes to priests, things are different.

Marci Hamilton is a law professor who works at Yeshiva University in New York, a school that has had many recent sexual abuse scandals. But she has no time to investigate Jews, either at Yeshiva or in Brooklyn, home to an explosion of child rape by Orthodox Jews. That's because she is too busy trying to stick it to priests.

Charges of sexual abuse were made last September by the Philadelphia District Attorney Seth Williams against Father Robert Brennan. A month later, the charges were withdrawn, following the accuser's death; he overdosed on drugs. Enter Hamilton. In November, she joined other rapacious lawyers

announcing that they were filing a lawsuit on behalf of the family of the alleged victim. Hamilton is obsessed with the Catholic Church in Philadelphia; it was her 18th lawsuit against the archdiocese.

Another Philadelphia priest, Father John P. Paul, stepped down as pastor of Our Lady of Calvary Parish in November. He resigned because of the emotional stress he has been under. In all his years as a priest, he has never had an accusation made against him (he was ordained in 1972). But now, out of the blue, he is being charged with abusing two boys in 1968, when he was a seminarian. It's funny how both of these alleged victims decided to wait 45 years to make their case—in tandem, no less.

The police were contacted but the case was dropped because the statute of limitations had expired. But Father Paul is still being investigated by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Had Father Paul been Mr. Paul, a public school teacher, and he was accused of violating a minor at the end of the school year last June, the statute of limitations would have expired (accusers have 90 days to file charges against public school teachers). Moreover, no one would be investigating him. But when it comes to Father Paul, even though the alleged abuse happened in the year Rev. Martin Luther King and Sen. Bobby Kennedy were shot, it's not too late to get him. It's never too late to get a priest.

Also in November, a 73-year-old priest from Chicago was shaken down for money by the same two con-artist brothers who had hustled him before. This time the priest said no. "We'll say you touched us—read the paper—they'll believe us," they said. Sadly, it's true.

Thanks to our anti-priest culture, fueled by the likes of Bill Maher, every priest is considered suspect. None are safe.