

OREGON'S REPUTATION

UNENVIABLE

The Catholic League has no sure way of knowing which state has the worst record in tolerating anti-Catholicism, but if we had to guess, Oregon would be right there in the running. That's interesting because Oregon has a disproportionate number of people who are agnostics and atheists. It may also explain why Oregonians are more anxious to give doctors the right to kill their patients than anywhere else in the nation.

It seems that advocates of doctor-assisted suicide in Oregon cannot make their case without bashing Catholicism. A measure barely passed in 1994 allowing assisted suicide but it was never implemented due to court challenges. Now the controversy has returned, with November 4 being the day when voters will decide whether the Oregon law that allows doctors to kill their patients should be repealed (though the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the right of states to ban doctor-assisted suicide, it has not said that such acts are unconstitutional).

The league hopes that the voices of life are louder than the voices of death in Oregon (if we had to bet, we'd bet they're not). But whatever the outcome, the battleground is strewn with anti-Catholicism. It is one thing for suicide fans like Barbara Coombs Lee to make anti-Catholic remarks, quite another when leading mainstream newspapers join the fray.

It seems that the pundits in Oregon can't get over the audacity of the Catholic Church to actively oppose doctor-assisted death. They take the old view—the one associated with their un-schooled brothers in the Klan—that Catholics and their Church ought to sit back and relax and leave the driving to non-Catholics.

When Catholics don't lay down and die, we get statements from

the *Register-Guard* in Eugene that “powerful national interests led by the Roman Catholic Church” are leading the charge. This, of course, is preferable to being told that Oregonians may have to “conform to the dictates of the Pope” if the Catholic side prevails (Coombs Lee made this remark).

It would be so refreshing to read that Oregonians reject the culture of death. It would be equally refreshing to note that they reject anti-Catholicism as well.