

# PRIESTS' RIGHTS MERIT VIGOROUS DEFENSE

When it comes to accusations of priestly sexual abuse, the accuser is never publicly identified—he is simply listed as John Doe. But this isn't enough to satisfy some: they want bishops to publish the names of all accused priests, even if there has never been a conviction, and even if the accused priest is dead. Moreover, every accused serial killer and maniacal terrorist merits immediate attention from civil libertarians, and their defense is applauded in liberal circles. Why should priests be treated any different?

The *Boston Globe* ran a huge front-page story recently taking Archbishop Sean O'Malley to task for not publishing the names of order priests who have been accused of abuse; as members of religious orders, they are not directly under his purview. By listing the names of accused diocesan priests, which he is not legally obliged to do, O'Malley made what he thought would be received as a goodwill gesture. Instead, the *Globe* saw blood in the water and went for the kill. Never once has this newspaper taken on the public school establishment, or any other religion, demanding the same outcome.

Because lawyers for Kansas City-St. Joseph Bishop Robert Finn agreed to a diversion—he will meet monthly with a local prosecutor in exchange for prosecution—some are saying it implies he is guilty of covering up for Fr. Shawn Ratigan. Yet Clay County prosecutor Dan White admitted, “I have the charge, but do I have conviction based upon the evidence I had?” Good point. Some said that Finn's lawyers were looking for loopholes in the child porn statutes. We hope they are—hopefully they will exploit every legal loophole there is.

It's time to level the playing field. Going beyond what the law requires should be taboo, and hiring only the toughest

lawyers money can buy should be the norm. To argue otherwise is to argue for injustice. Lay Catholics should be brazenly unapologetic.