

# ROLL CALL SMEARS INNOCENT PRIEST

On November 20, we responded to an article in the influential Washington, D.C. newspaper *Roll Call*, which smeared House Chaplain Father Daniel Coughlin; the Chicago priest has held the position since 2000.

We had always held *Roll Call* in high regard, but following this hit job on Father Coughlin, we no longer could. What the newspaper did was classic yellow journalism.

On November 19, *Roll Call* made a big splash on its website with a “Breaking News” story on Father Coughlin. The headline, “Chaplain Managed Abusive Priests,” gave the impression that Coughlin either did something illegal or something immoral. The fact of the matter is that he did neither.

In the November 20 print edition, *Roll Call* discussed how Coughlin ministered to troubled priests in Chicago. For example, it said that he played the role of “caretaker, providing services ranging from room and board to spiritual support and advocacy.” Coughlin admits to “pastoring priests” and the article mentions that he “was not responsible for overseeing the men.”

Now it seems plain that in every segment of the population there would be men and women who go astray. It also seems plain that if the communities or organizations in which these troubled souls live actually care a whit about them, services would be offered to deal with their malady. Indeed, to do nothing would suggest callous indifference to their fate.

So that was the story. Father Coughlin, before being named House Chaplain, tended to the needs of troubled priests. Instead of being smeared—which in fact *Roll Call* did—Coughlin should have been applauded.

We issued a release calling on Morton Kondracke, the executive editor of *Roll Call*, to extend an apology not only to Father Coughlin, but to the Catholic community as well for exploiting the issue of priestly sexual abuse.

Kondracke refused to apologize, but the fact that this story died a quick death, with no follow up piece, suggests he got the message. Hopefully, he will have learned something.