

SEAL OF THE CONFESSIONAL UNDER ATTACK; VOICE OF THE FAITHFUL MEMBER IS RESPONSIBLE

As states deal with the problem of child sexual abuse, some are targeting the traditional priest-penitent privilege that exempts priests from reporting crimes to the authorities. The latest example is New Hampshire: under a new bill the exemption previously afforded would end. But in the state of Washington, legislative efforts to address the issue of sexual abuse continue to respect the priest-penitent privilege.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“It is striking that in a state known for its large share of ‘unchurched’ citizens, Washington is showing more respect for the inviolable nature of the seal of the confessional than in church-going New Hampshire. Maybe that’s because Washington doesn’t have an active chapter of Voice of the Faithful.

“Anne Coughlin is the person most responsible for the New Hampshire bill that attacks the confessional. A Voice of the Faithful member, she is also a master of spin: she says her actions are ‘a defense of a Catholic institution.’ She admits she has no evidence whatsoever to show that priests in New Hampshire are being told in the confessional of crimes against children: ‘I can’t prove that ever happened. But I’m absolutely convinced that it has.’ And we’re absolutely convinced she’s an angry, embittered Catholic who is jumping on the let’s-get-the-Church bandwagon.

“There are no doubt many well-meaning Catholics who belong to Voice of the Faithful. But it is becoming increasingly clear

that the group also has its share of ideologues, activists who are publicly boasting of their membership in the organization. This is unfortunate because people like Ann Coughlin are more of a menace to the Church than the non-observant. It is time the leadership of Voice of the Faithful say whether members like Coughlin accurately represent the group's vision of Catholicism. If she were publicly identified as a Catholic League member, I would have no difficulty in denouncing her."