

SEARCH FOR A SCAPEGOAT QUICKENS IN CHURCH SEX ABUSE SCANDAL

Catholic League News Release

April 3, 2002

Over the past few weeks, several explanations have emerged trying to fix blame on the Church sex abuse scandal. Catholic League president William Donohue speaks to these accusations today:

“It is not uncommon for scapegoating to occur whenever an individual or institutional crisis emerges. Regarding the sex abuse scandal that is currently rocking the Catholic Church, several examples have emerged. In my news release of March 28, I critically examined accusations against gays, celibacy and the media. Today I would like to address the role of lawyers, psychiatrists and the pope.

“There is little doubt that too much reliance on lawyers has contributed to the problem. But it is too easy to say that were it not for the attorneys, this problem wouldn't have surfaced. Lawyers are trained in damage control and to the extent that Church leaders relied too much on their advice, the consequences have been disastrous. At the end of the day, though, lawyers are not empowered to make final decisions. Bishops are.

“There is no shortage of trained psychiatrists who wildly overestimate their reparative powers. Sometimes this is born of utopian visions while in other instances it is simply a matter of professional arrogance. The fact is that while most maladies can be treated to some extent, there are some that

cannot be cured. The compulsiveness that marks so many sexual-abuse disorders is a case in point. It is about time those in the behavioral and social sciences admitted their limitations. It is also about time that those who make the final decisions filter the advice they get from these quarters.

“It is laughable to pin this problem on the Holy Father. While he is the leader of one-billion Catholics worldwide, he cannot micro-manage the decision-making of bishops from Botswana to the Bronx. And in no way is he responsible for episcopal paralysis.

“In short, there is no substitute for common sense and the courage to act on one’s convictions.”