

# SHOULD PRIESTS HAVE RIGHTS

In the following news release, we replied to a September 12 statement by SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests):

“Gerald Payne, Kentucky’s SNAP coordinator, wants state authorities to warn residents when Catholic priests who have been accused, *but not convicted*, of sexual abuse live in their neighborhood. Those who think this is an anomaly are wrong: the headquarters of SNAP is flagging this story on the front page of its website.

“It is not everyday that a national advocacy organization, on either the right or the left, argues that civil liberties should be suspended for one class of citizens. Indeed, this kind of tactic is usually branded fascistic. But this is what happens when an organization that used to be in the media spotlight is increasingly ignored—it tends to become more radical. And make no mistake about it, the reason the media are shunning SNAP (and groups like it) is a direct consequence of the reforms instituted by the Catholic Church: the new policies make SNAP’s very existence moot.

“In any event, to say that SNAP has snapped would be a gross understatement: It has fully discredited itself and will be unable to recover whatever credibility it once had.”

After our statement was released, some so-called progressive Catholics complained that we are soft on abusive priests. Not at all. We just make a distinction between those who are charged with a crime and those who have been found guilty in a court of law. The former are presumed innocent and are therefore to be accorded all the rights the law provides.

We thought progressives cared about civil liberties for everyone, but perhaps we were wrong. But the fact is we do, and we will continue to insist that priests not be treated as

second-class citizens.