

SURVEY OF CATHOLIC PRIESTS ALREADY TAINTED

On June 26, the *Los Angeles Times*, along with the Allentown, Pennsylvania daily *The Morning Call*, mailed a survey to Catholic priests nationwide “with the goal of better understanding the issues and challenges facing the church in America today.” Because the response rate was so low, another mailing was sent on July 25. Many priests have complained to the Catholic League about some of the questions and the way they were phrased. Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“No wonder so many priests have contacted the Catholic League about this survey. For example, question 26 reads, ‘When you need counsel and guidance, how comfortable do you feel about going to your bishop or to the superiors of your order?’ One of the priests who contacted us rightly labeled the question ‘ridiculous,’ saying, ‘It is just not a reality that priests go to their bishop for counsel since they have personal spiritual directors and it is not practical especially in large dioceses.’ Moreover, whatever might be said could then be twisted: ‘But if most priests answer that they never go to their bishop, then it could look like the priests don’t trust their bishop.’

“Several priests objected to questions 45 and 47. After first asking priests whether they favored women’s ordination (#44) and the ordination of married priests (#46), they were then asked, ‘Regardless of whether you favor or oppose [it]...which of the following statements do you think is the most compelling reason for doing so?’ This is a textbook example of an ideologically loaded trap that is ripe for misinterpretation.

“The reason the two newspapers sent the survey out in June was

to satisfy their voyeuristic appetite. The reason they sent it out again in July is because they got stiffed. All of which reveals more to us about the *Los Angeles Times* and *The Morning Call* than Catholic priests. We look forward to 'objective' articles and editorials on the survey."