

# KANSAS CITY STAR UNHAPPY WITH SEX SURVEY RESULTS

This Sunday, January 30, the *Kansas City Star* will release its sex survey of Roman Catholic priests. Catholic League president William Donohue has read the Knight Ridder story on the subject (the *Star* is a Knight Ridder paper) and commented as follows:

“The sex survey is essentially bad news for the tabloid. The two most important findings show that a) 65 percent say the Church is ‘caring and compassionate’ in its treatment of priests with HIV or AIDS, while only 4 percent are critical and b) only 14 percent think that changing Church teachings on homosexuality would be extremely effective.

“It is clear that the tabloid did not like these findings. We know this because while only 4 percent were critical of the Church in its handling of priests with HIV or AIDS, the one and only remark selected for publication on this subject came from the 4 percent pool. There were other examples like this, suggesting that when the raw data prove to be disappointing, those who offer the desired critical response merit a high profile.

“The story says that 800 of 3000 priests responded to the survey. Yet later it says that ‘some refused to participate and questioned the The Star’s motives.’ Well, now, isn’t this cute. By saying 800 responded, it suggests all from this group completed the survey, yet if this is true, how would they know that some ‘refused to participate and questioned’ their motives? Were these among the 2200 who didn’t respond or the 800 who did?

“One final point. The Torah forbids an Orthodox Jewish man from having sex with his wife while she is menstruating, and

for a time afterward. During Ramadan, which lasts for a month, Muslims are forbidden from having sex during the daylight hours of their fasting period. Question: Will the *Kansas City Star* now do a survey of Jews and Muslims to see how many are cheating? And while they're at it, they may want to explore why a reported 37 percent of Protestant pastors have confessed to having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church."

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## POSTPONING VOTE ON HOUSE CHAPLAIN BUYS TIME

Today the full House was scheduled to vote on the selection of the new House Chaplain. But House Speaker Dennis Hastert has postponed the vote until next month.

Catholic League president William Donohue voiced his concerns over this decision today:

"Since Christmas we have known that the full House was scheduled to vote on the House Chaplain on January 27. But now the vote has been postponed until next month. Yet if there were no improprieties involved in the selection process, why postpone the vote? And if there were problems, what is accomplished by moving the vote?

"House Speaker Dennis Hastert now wants to introduce his choice of Rev. Charles Wright to key players in both parties behind closed doors (joining Hastert was House Majority Leader Dick Armey). Why? Buying time is what politicians do when they're nervous. More important, buying time simply skirts the central issue, and that issue is justice. All that matters is

whether Father Timothy O'Brien was treated fairly. More accurately, nothing else *should* matter.

"Once again it is being reported in *Roll Call* that Hastert knew that Father O'Brien was the top choice of the bipartisan selection committee. If this was the case, then both Hastert and Arme y need to explain why they could not in good conscience vote for Father O'Brien, knowing that he was the only candidate who received a majority of the votes from both parties. And then they can explain to their colleague, House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, why he was wrong in selecting Father O'Brien as well.

"They can change the vote but they can't change history. If they really want to deal squarely with this issue, perhaps they ought to invite Father O'Brien to one of their closed door meetings. Good luck."

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## HOUSE CHAPLAIN CASUALTY: FR. TIMOTHY O'BRIEN

Many myths have recently surfaced regarding Father Timothy O'Brien, the Catholic priest who was rejected in his bid for the post of House Chaplain. Catholic League president William Donohue spoke to this issue today:

**"Myth #1:** Father O'Brien lobbied for the job and is now a sore loser.

**Fact:** Unlike others (principally those who were not finalists), Father O'Brien *never* lobbied for this job. The time has come for those who argue otherwise to produce the evidence. They can begin by showing journalists proof of the

voluminous letters they received from those pushing for O'Brien.

**Myth #2:** Father O'Brien is a left-wing cleric who is soft on abortion.

**Fact:** This lie is easy to disprove: Father O'Brien previously served for four years as Director of Communications for the Catholic League, has been pro-life and pro-voucher all his life and was the recipient of a grant from the Bradley Foundation.\* Moreover, even if he were on the left, it would not matter to us: our job is to combat anti-Catholicism. Period.

**"Myth #3:** Father O'Brien lacked sufficient pastoral experience for the job.

**Fact:** His undergraduate degree is in Pastoral Ministry; his specialized studies include Counseling and Addictive Personality; he has been Consultant to the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Department of Social Ministry since 1984; he served as Chaplain at Walter Reed Medical Center; he has worked in youth ministries most of his life; and for three decades he has counseled soldiers—male and female, single and married—as a Colonel in the Army Reserve. Moreover, if this were indeed his weak spot, why is it that 15 of the 21 congressmen who voted for him didn't think he was lacking in this quality?

"Finally, the biggest irony of all is that those who maintain that Father O'Brien was guilty of lobbying are currently working overtime lobbying the Catholic League to dump him. But it is a useless crusade: we will stick by him right to the end."

\* In the original news release, the Catholic League mistakenly referred to the Bradley grant as "huge."

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# DONATIONS MADE TO VANDALIZED BROOKLYN CHURCHES

Since last fall, six Brooklyn Roman Catholic Churches have been vandalized. Statues have been decapitated, broken and defaced, and in some instances hate mail has accompanied the desecrations.

Over the past few weeks, the Catholic League has contacted the Brooklyn District Attorney's office, the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice, asking the authorities to make these investigations a priority; the league also offered to assist in any way it could. Today Catholic League president William Donohue took another step:

"We are sending \$500 each to St. Jerome's, Our Lady of Refuge, St. Francis of Assisi, St. Fortunata, Apostles of Infinite Love Convent and St. Rita's to help pay in the restoration of the vandalized statues. From what we have learned, these crimes were not the act of wayward delinquents, rather they have all the markings of deliberate malice. Indeed, the fact that they occurred in the same New York borough where white-collar miscreants recently insulted Catholics with hate speech masked as art, suggests that anti-Catholic bigotry is alive and well in Brooklyn.

"The message of hate that these crimes carry is unmistakable and that is why the Catholic League will do whatever it can to help bring about justice."

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# HOUSE CHAPLAIN SEARCH IS TAINTED

Catholic League president William Donohue commented today on the search for the new House Chaplain:

"I have now read all letters received from congressmen involved in the process, the Final Report of the Chaplain Search Committee and all news reports on the subject. The only safe conclusion to draw is that the search for the new House Chaplain is tainted.

"It is tainted for at least two reasons: a) questions asked of Father Timothy O'Brien in the second round of interviews were improper at best and bigoted at worst and b) there are conflicting reports on whether House Speaker Dennis Hastert and House Majority Leader Dick Armey knew that O'Brien was the top candidate as chosen by the selection committee.

"When Rep. Steve Largent asked O'Brien whether wearing his collar might be seen as divisive, he must have known that the outgoing House Chaplain, Rev. James Ford, has been wearing a collar for the last 21 years; this suggests that something else was troubling Largent. Rep. Dave Weldon's question—name three of your favorite passages from Scripture—while not inappropriate, was extremely narrow and designed to yield contentious results. And when Rep. John Shimkus asked whether a single, celibate priest could adequately counsel family members, he must have known that priests have been successfully doing this for ages.

"Regarding the other question, congressmen Hastert, Armey and Joe Pitts claim that it would have been 'impossible' for anyone to say that O'Brien was the top choice of the selection committee; congressmen Ralph Regula and Zach Wamp also support this position, albeit less strongly. On the other hand,

congressmen Shimkus, Anna Eshoo, Lois Capps and Henry Waxman say that it was well-known that O'Brien placed first. And it is not disputed that Rep. Dick Gephardt knew that O'Brien was number one (he was part of the final trio along with Hastert and Armey). Furthermore, the person who counted the votes, Ted Van der Meid, is counsel to Hastert.

"There is enough here for the full House to seriously question whether justice has been done in the course of selecting the new House Chaplain."

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## **GOOD FRIDAY RULING YIELDS RIGHT RESULT**

The U.S. Supreme Court today rejected an appeal by a retired school teacher that maintained that a Maryland law requiring the closing of all public schools on Good Friday was a violation of the constitutionally required separation of church and state. Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this issue today:

"It is welcome news that Maryland has the right to continue its tradition, begun in 1865, to close all public schools on Good Friday. But the rationale employed by the 4<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which the high court left standing, is unsatisfactory.

"In *Koenick v. Felton*, the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit ruled that 'The four-day holiday around Easter is supported by a pragmatic, legitimate secular purpose.' The court was referring to the expected high absentee rate among teachers and students surrounding the Easter holiday. It should instead have squarely faced the issue by saying that the Maryland law was accommodating—not

sponsoring—a religious tradition that is grounded in our nation’s history. Indeed, in Montgomery County, Maryland, schools properly close on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah; this accommodates Judaism without sponsoring anything.

“Some states close schools at the beginning of hunting season, but no one contends that by doing so those who don’t hunt are somehow discriminated against. What the state is doing in such instances is simply accommodating a tradition dear to its citizenry; it is not sponsoring hunting.

“There is a profound difference between accommodation and sponsorship. Former Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger said it best when he said that the Constitution ‘affirmatively mandates accommodation, not merely tolerance, of all religions, and forbids hostility toward any.’”

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## **REPORT ON HOUSE CHAPLAIN POST IS UNSATISFACTORY**

The Final Report of the Chaplain Selection Committee was released today by the co-chairmen of the committee, Rep. Earl Pomeroy and Rep. Tom Bliley. Catholic League president William Donohue read the report and issued the following comment on it today:

“If there had been no serious questions left unanswered following the selection of Rev. Charles Wright as the new House Chaplain, then the Final Report would have been a satisfactory conclusion to the process. But, unfortunately, this is not the case. Not only were there some very disturbing aspects to the selection process, the Final Report does not address the issues that are responsible for the controversy.



“Exactly one week ago today, I faxed a letter to all 18 members of the selection committee asking pointed questions about the process. In addition, I wrote to the three congressmen charged with making the final selection, Rep. Dennis Hastert, Rep. Dick Armey and Rep. Dick Gephardt, asking them to comment on certain aspects of the process. While I have heard from several of them, including Hastert and Armey, most failed to directly answer the questions they were given, thus feeding the speculation that the whole truth has not been told.

“Perhaps most important, stark contradictions have emerged in the responses I was sent by the congressmen. Moreover, there are contradictions between the Final Report and the responses of some who served on the selection committee. And just as important, the Final Report does not address the ethically outrageous questions that Father Timothy O’Brien was asked in the second round of the interview process.

“Next week the Catholic League will issue a more detailed statement summarizing our objections to the selection process. In the meantime, those who have tried to pressure the league would do well to take a hike.”

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## **HOUSE CHAPLAIN ISSUE NEEDS VETTING**

At a press conference yesterday, House Speaker Dennis Hastert was asked a question regarding the controversy over the appointment of the new House Chaplain. His answer did not satisfy Catholic League president William Donohue; he now explains why:

"I have written two letters today that are being faxed to the appropriate congressmen regarding the House Chaplain issue. One letter, which is being sent to the nine Republicans and nine Democrats on the selection committee, asks the following: 'Specifically, I would like to know a) who you thought was the best candidate for the job b) to whom, if anyone, did you make your choice known and c) whether you know if the collective ranking of the selection committee was given to Rep. Dennis Hastert, Rep. Dick Armey and Rep. Dick Gephardt.'

"The other letter, which is being sent to Hastert, Armey and Gephardt, asks 'were you aware when you voted for Rev. Charles Wright that it was the consensus of the selection committee that Father Timothy O'Brien was its first choice and Rev. Wright was its third choice? If so, did you share that information with the two other congressmen who made the final selection?'

"The position of Rep. Hastert and Rep. Armey, the two responsible for rejecting Father O'Brien, is that the Catholic priest lacked sufficient pastoral experience to get the job. This raises the question why only two of the 21 congressmen involved in the selection process (the 18 on the committee plus Gephardt) came to this conclusion.

"Also, we are supporting Rep. John Dingell's request for full disclosure on this matter. That a priest was asked if wearing a Roman collar might be seen as divisive—when the outgoing Lutheran chaplain has been wearing one for the last 21 years—is outrageous. It is also outrageous to call into question Father O'Brien's counseling abilities simply because he is a single, celibate male. We want to know what's behind these questions."