

MASSACHUSETTS HIGH COURT REJECTS CLERGY ABUSE LAWSUIT

The highest court in Massachusetts, the Supreme Judicial Court, has dismissed a lawsuit brought by a woman who claims she was molested by a Catholic priest more than 40 years ago. In doing so, the Supreme Judicial Court overturned a decision by the state's Appeals Court that ruled in favor of the woman. Today's decision by the state's highest Court said that the statute of limitations had expired. It also said the woman should have filed her lawsuit earlier; she claimed a connection between the abuse and the emotional harm she says she endured.

Catholic League president William Donohue applauded the decision:

"It is impossible to say whether the woman in this case was delivered a morally unjust decision today. But one thing is certain: it would have been legally unjust to convict the accused, Rev. Gerard Creighton. The reason why we have a statute of limitations in law is precisely to guard against cases like this. How is the accused—always assumed innocent—supposed to defend himself against accusations made a long time ago (in this instance several decades ago) when witnesses are dead, memories have faded and personal vendettas may be at work?

"The U.S. Supreme Court will confront this issue directly in a case involving a California law that allows clergy sex abuse charges to be filed after the statute of limitations has expired. Right now there is nothing but confusion: last week a judge dropped a case against the Diocese of Palm Beach on statute of limitations grounds (the case also applied to the Diocese of Rockville Centre). And just this week, the first lawsuit against the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for clergy sex

abuse was filed by a man who says he was abused roughly 20 years ago by a priest.

“No one who has fairly watched the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church unfold would maintain that the Church has handled this problem well. But it must be said in equal firmness that the current environment is anything but fair to the Church. We hail today’s decision and look forward to the high court overturning the California law.”

CLERGY VICTIMS GROUP LAUNCHES WITCH HUNT AGAINST PRIESTS IN ERIE, PA

The northwestern Pennsylvania chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) has embarked on an aggressive campaign, posting signs on the front doors of Catholic schools throughout Erie County urging people to come forward with the names of molesting priests. Erie Bishop Donald Trautman labeled the unauthorized campaign as “reprehensible.” He accused those involved of invading private property and of scaring children.

Catholic League president William Donohue addressed this issue today:

“The national organization of SNAP has done some important work but the regional chapter in northwestern Pennsylvania is out of control and needs to be checked. The regional group has admitted that it cannot name one priest in Erie County who has been accused of abusing children, but that hasn’t stopped it from setting off the alarms. Given the lack of evidence,

it would make as much sense for the Erie branch of SNAP to target all houses of worship and sectarian schools with its inflammatory signs. That it has chosen to focus exclusively on Catholic schools is revealing: this is a witch hunt against Catholic priests.

“It cannot be said too many times that two-thirds of one percent of priests nationwide are currently under investigation for the sexual abuse of a minor. While one priest is too many, it smacks of bigotry to launch the kind of exploitative campaign that has begun in northwestern Pennsylvania: it unnecessarily frightens children and it unfairly stigmatizes priests. We look to the leadership of the national headquarters of SNAP to condemn this tactic for what it is—a media grandstanding event done at the expense of justice to innocent priests.”

FLAP OVER SANTORUM SPARKS NY CONGRESSMAN TO BASH CATHOLIC CHURCH; APOLOGY DEMANDED

The controversy over remarks made by Senator Rick Santorum has now led New York Congressman Jerrold Nadler to accuse the Catholic Church of bigotry.

Last night on the Fox News Channel show, “Hannity and Colmes,” Nadler said Santorum believes that homosexual acts are a problem. To which Hannity said, “The acts. By the way that’s the Catholic Church’s position.” Nadler: “Well, they’re entitled to it.” Hannity: “Are they bigoted?” Nadler: “I don’t agree with their position.” Hannity: “Are they bigoted?” Nadler: “I think that’s a bigoted position.”

Hannity: "You think Catholics are bigoted?" Nadler: "I didn't say Catholics are bigoted." Hannity: "That's exactly what you're saying." Nadler: "No. I don't think Catholics are bigoted. I think that that's—that position is a discriminatory position."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"Congressman Jerrold Nadler should apologize to Catholics immediately. No one is fooled by his little dance that Catholics are not bigoted—it's just that their religion is. To be a practicing Catholic is to accept the Church's teachings on homosexuality, as well as slavery, genocide, abortion and many other issues, and there is nothing bigoted about it.

"The Catholic Church believes, as does Senator Rick Santorum, that human beings possess equal dignity, independent of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, class, sex, sexual orientation and the like. The Catholic Church also believes that some behaviors are inherently sinful, among them fornication, adultery and homosexuality. To brand that position as bigoted is to insult Catholics everywhere. It is also the tactic of a bully who seeks to silence a great institution that represents one-quarter of the American population.

"Unlike some Democrats, who are out to destroy Rick Santorum, we are not looking for Nadler's head. What we want is an apology."

SENATOR SANTORUM DEFENDS MARRIAGE; ATTACKED BY GAYS FOR DOING SO

U.S. Senator Rick Santorum recently defended the institution of marriage and for doing so has been criticized by gay activist groups. "If the Supreme Court says you have the right to consensual [gay] sex within your home, then you have the right to bigamy, you have the right to polygamy, you have the right to incest, you have the right to adultery. You have the right to anything," Santorum said.

Defending Santorum is Catholic League president William Donohue:

"Rick Santorum expresses the Christian understanding of marriage and for this gay activists want the Republican leadership to condemn his remarks. Indeed, they have compared Santorum's comments to the statements made by Senator Trent Lott regarding the segregationist legacy of Senator Strom Thurmond. But the comparison fails on the face of it.

"A segregationist is anti-black. To defend the institution of marriage is pro-civil society. This traditional institution cannot be defended if all alternative lifestyles are treated as its equal. Just as it is impossible to endorse privileges for senior citizens while simultaneously awarding the same privileges to non-seniors, it is impossible to privilege monogamous relationships between a man and a woman in the institution of marriage while awarding an identical status to those engaged in homosexuality, bigamy, polygamy, incest and adultery. If the institution of marriage is special then attempts to relativize it must be resisted.

"There are other problems with the analogy as advanced by gay groups. To be anti-black is to be opposed to someone on the

basis of his ancestry. To be opposed to homosexuality is to be opposed to what a person does. There is a fundamental difference between race and behavior and attempts to obscure these differences are disingenuous.

“Senator Santorum’s defense of marriage is in keeping with his Roman Catholic convictions. We earnestly defend his right to do so.”

CATHOLICISM ON TRIAL: RELIGIOUS TEST APPLIED TO JUDICIAL NOMINEE

President George W. Bush has nominated J. Leon Holmes to serve as a federal judge for eastern Arkansas. But his nomination has run into trouble with some Democrats who believe Holmes is too religious.

Catholic League president William Donohue explains why the league is strongly supporting the Holmes nomination:

“Judge Leon Holmes graduated first in his law school class; he holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from Duke University; he is currently adjunct professor at the University of Arkansas School of Law; he has had a distinguished legal career spanning more than two decades; he has been endorsed by the American Bar Association; he has won the plaudits of his hometown newspaper, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*; he is held in high esteem by his colleagues; and he is known by his ideological foes as a man ‘shot through with integrity.’ But this convert to Catholicism has upset some Democrats.

“Holmes is a man of deep religious conviction. He is pro-life and is fully supportive of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church. In the eyes of some, this is a red flag. They seize upon a flip comment he made 23 years ago (for which he has apologized) about abortion. What really irks his critics is that he will not apologize for his pro-life convictions. This notwithstanding the fact that Holmes has already said that only a constitutional amendment could overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

“Holmes has written on the fundamental equality of men and women. He and his wife have also written on the positive meaning of the mutual subjection of husbands and wives. Yet Senators Schumer, Feinstein and Durbin have unfairly tagged him a misogynist, misunderstanding what the pope, the U.S. bishops and Holmes have said regarding this matter.

“Holmes’ critics are doing what the Constitution expressly prohibits—they are applying a religious test to his nomination. That they are doing it in a back-door manner makes it all the more contemptible.”

CATHOLIC-BASHING PLAY OPENS ON GOOD FRIDAY

“The Children of Fatima” will open on Good Friday at Rider University in New Jersey. Written by Rider faculty member Michael Friel, the plot revolves around a Catholic schoolboy in the 1960s who fears that the world will end when the pope reveals the third secret of Fatima.

According to the *Princeton Packet*, a local newspaper, Friel admits that a friend of his called the play “Catholic bashing.” To which Friel replied, “I’m really going for the

way that all institutions, whether it's religion or government or even your parent, use fear to get what they want. By instilling fear in you, they can control you." The play features a drunken Irish priest and a "hard-assed Sr. Regina Coeli."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"If this play has a universal message about the way institutions of any kind use fear to control people, then why, out of all the institutions in society, did Friel choose the Catholic Church to slam? Why did his friend label the play Catholic bashing as opposed to, say, institution bashing? Why is the play opening on Good Friday?"

"I have faxed a letter to Rider University president Bart Luedeke asking him to do for Catholics what he recently did for Jews. On December 3, 2002, President Luedeke released a statement to the Rider community distancing the university from an upcoming appearance on campus of the anti-Semitic poet Amiri Baraka. Luedeke said Baraka's visit to the campus 'does not reflect a University endorsement of the beliefs and assertions attributed to him.' He went on to say that Baraka's statements 'have offended many members of our community and at face value stand in stark contrast to the sense of human value so important at Rider.'

"That was a commendable statement. In the same vein, I am asking President Luedeke to reassure Catholic students that the university does not endorse this play. Beyond this, is there anyone who believes that any college would open an anti-Semitic play on Yom Kippur or an anti-black play on Martin Luther King Day?"

CRITICS OF SEC. PAIGE HAVE A LARGER AGENDA

The recent attacks on U.S. Secretary of Education Roderick Paige have escalated. But in the view of Catholic League president William Donohue, the attack is really aimed at expelling Christian values from the public square. He explains why today:

“The transcript of the remarks made by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige, in an interview with Baptist Press writer Todd Starnes, is now available. Any fair-minded person who reads the entire transcript will conclude that no apology needs to be extended by Secretary Paige. The obverse, however, is not true: he is deserving of an apology by all those who have unfairly maligned him. After today’s irresponsible article in the *Washington Post*, columnist Richard Cohen should lead the way.

“Cohen accuses Paige of seeking to inculcate his ‘strong faith’ into the curriculum. And what faith is Paige guilty of wanting to spread? Why ‘the Christian one.’ Cohen then chastises Paige for his insensitivity to Jews, Muslims, et al. But this is all nonsense. Here’s what Paige was asked: ‘Given the choice between private and Christian—or private and public universities, what do you think—who do you think has the best deal?’ To which Paige said, ‘That’s a judgment, too, that would vary because each of them have real strong points and some of them have some vulnerabilities. But, you know, all things being equal, I would prefer to have a child in a school where there’s a strong appreciation for values, the kind of values that I think are associated with the Christian communities, and so that this child can be brought up in an environment that teaches them to have strong faith and to understand that there is a force greater than them personally.’

“For Cohen to twist this into saying Paige wants the Christian faith taught in the public schools is malicious. There is a profound difference between teaching values grounded in Christianity and teaching the Christian faith. What Cohen, and others, are doing constitutes an attempt to eradicate the Judeo-Christian heritage that is the underpinning of our society. Christians take note: their goal is larger than Paige.”

PICTURE OF MOTHER TERESA ON BUS PASS ANGERS ATHEIST GROUP

The Madison Metro System of Madison, Wisconsin, features a picture of Mother Teresa on its April bus pass; the saintly nun was chosen because she made Time magazine’s list of the 100 Most Important People of the 20th century.

Protesting this decision is the Freedom From Religion Foundation, headquartered in Madison. The organization’s president is Annie Laurie Gaylor and it is her opinion that the picture of Mother Teresa on the bus pass is “an insult to Madisonians who value women’s rights, and the separation of church and state.”

Catholic League president William Donohue commented on this today:

“I have just faxed a letter to Catherine Debo, Transit General Manager of the Madison Metro System, requesting that she consider giving equal time to the concerns of the Freedom From Religion Foundation. I have asked that she issue a monthly bus pass with nothing on it. When riders question its meaning, she could say that the blank bus pass commemorates what the

Freedom From Religion Foundation believes in. Nothing.”

DEMOCRATS TOLERATE ANTI-CHRISTIAN CONGRESSMAN

Democratic Congressman Gary Ackerman of New York has called for U.S. Secretary Rod Paige to resign for expressing his belief that the values taught in Christian schools are superior to those learned in public schools. Failing his resignation, Ackerman has called on President Bush to demand Paige’s resignation. Ackerman has been joined by other Democrats in calling for Paige’s ouster.

Catholic League president William Donohue explains today why he is labeling Ackerman an anti-Christian bigot who should be driven out of office:

“U.S. Secretary Rod Paige states what millions of Americans believe, namely that Christian values are superior to the hollow values that mark public education, and for this Rep. Gary Ackerman accuses him of ‘the Taliban approach to education.’ In short, Paige’s sympathies for Christian values make him a terrorist. This is not the voice of a rational man—it is the voice of a mudslinger.

“Democratic Congressman James Moran recently blamed Jews for pressuring the U.S. to go to war with Iraq. And what was the reaction of his Jewish colleague, Gary Ackerman? Ackerman did not ask for his resignation—he merely advised Moran not to seek reelection!

“On March 27, Gary Ackerman was asked to vote on a non-binding resolution urging President George W. Bush, in recognition of

the U.S. war in Iraq, to declare a day of prayer and fasting. Ackerman voted no.

“Any one of these three instances proves nothing. But combined they do: they tell us that Gary Ackerman is an anti-Christian bigot who should be driven from office.”

EDUCATION SECRETARY SHOULD NOT APOLOGIZE

U.S. Education Secretary Rod Paige is being denounced by several organizations and public officials for praising Christian values. “All things equal,” he remarked, “I would prefer to have a child in a school that has a strong appreciation for the values of the Christian community, where a child is taught to have a strong faith.” He also said, “The reason that Christian schools and Christian universities are growing is a result of a strong value system. In a religious environment the value system is set. That’s not the case in a public school where there are so many different kids with different kinds of values.”

Catholic League president William Donohue defended Secretary Paige today and urged him not to apologize:

“Secretary Paige should not apologize for exercising his freedom of speech. He did not lose his First Amendment right to freedom of speech when he became Secretary of Education. Nor can it persuasively be maintained that his remarks were offensive: they simply reflect the sentiments of millions of Americans, including those Americans who have their kids in public schools.

“Shame on the ADL, the ACLU, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the National Education Association, the Islamic Networks Group of San Jose, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, Representative Nita Lowey and others for criticizing Secretary Paige. Their intolerance for freedom of speech is appalling. And their implied defense of the decrepit value system that marks public education, what with its morally bankrupt celebration of moral relativism, is just as bad.

“Secretary Paige has spoken the truth. For that he should be commended.”