

BISHOPS MAKE PROGRESS; MUCH WORK REMAINS

When the bishops assembled in Dallas on June 13, they did so in a climate of apprehensiveness. Two days later, they left in a mood of contentment. While not everyone was happy with the charter that was approved (including many who voted for it), a calmness was finally evident.

The U.S. Bishops' Ad Hoc Committee on Sexual Abuse floated a draft of the document the week before the Dallas meeting. It got mixed reviews. We issued a statement saying "The draft is a reasonable document that should allay the worst fears of a skeptical laity. It is thoughtful, pointed and fair to all parties." But there was a loophole: the draft allowed priests to remain in ministry if they had offended only once in their career and had since been rehabilitated.

It was this exception that brought about the greatest criticism (we called for greater clarification). So when the bishops met in Dallas, they were pressured to make some changes. They were also besieged by Catholics who were pushing their own agenda and by a media that got caught up in the frenzy.

On the opening day of the meeting, Bishop Wilton Gregory, president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, delivered what the Catholic League dubbed a "home run" speech. It amounted to "a collective act of contrition on the part of the bishops." Perhaps most important, we said, "It set the tone for the entire meeting."

When the final vote was tallied, much had been accomplished. The bishops made it clear that there was no room in active ministry for any priest who had abused a minor. They added that from this day forward any allegations of wrongdoing would

be passed on to the civil authorities. Also approved was greater lay participation at the diocesan level and a national oversight board, headed by Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, to monitor the work of the bishops.

Some wondered if the document had taken the due process rights of accused priests too lightly. Others complained that the bishops said virtually nothing about their own role in enabling molesting priests to move from parish to parish. Still others criticized the statement for its refusal to address such issues as homosexuality, dissent, celibacy and women's ordination.

Everyone agrees there is much work to be done. The relationship between theological dissidence and behavioral deviance is one the league would like to see examined.

VOUCHER VICTORY

On June 27, the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 to allow school vouchers. The Catholic League filed a friend-of-the-court brief in this case. Here is an excerpt from our news release on the subject:

"This is a victory for the poor that triumphed over the so-called champions of the poor. Condemned to failing public schools in Cleveland, the poor have long opted for the same equal opportunity afforded the wealthy. Now they have it.

"There were four dissenting judges, led by Justice David Souter, who still don't get it. Souter wrote 'There is, in any case, no way to interpret the 96.6 percent of current voucher money going to

religious schools as reflecting a free and genuine choice by the families that apply to vouchers.’ He has it backwards: there is no free and genuine choice by families in choosing the right school for their children if they are locked in to the public-school monopoly. The fact that most parents opt for sending their kids to Catholic schools is a tribute to parochial schools and a damning indictment of public schools.

“In a nation where some judges think it is constitutional to burn the American flag on public school property, but it is unconstitutional to say the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag, this decision comes at the right time. We hope that those atheists who are at war with our religious heritage will also avail themselves of vouchers and enroll their kids in private schools run by non-believers. The sooner we empty the public schools of these people, the better.”

THE DEEDS OF DALLAS

William A. Donohue

When the cardinals left Rome in April, they came away with a statement that most branded inadequate. The same judgment befell the draft document of the bishops prior to the Dallas meeting. After Dallas, there is still much discontent, but a closer look at the survey data reveal a Church on the mend.

In Dallas, the bishops voted 239-13 in favor of the “Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.” Now contrast this finding—95 percent of the bishops approved the document—with the survey results of the *Washington Post*: it disclosed that only 44 percent of Catholics approved the final

charter. Yet a *USA Today/CNN* poll found a 56 percent approval rating; it also reported that 63 percent said the bishops' policy would be effective for dealing with the problem. To top things off, a Zogby survey found that 79 percent of Catholics endorsed the policy. What's going on?

There's nothing wrong with the polling methodology. What the data reveal is an angry and confused laity. Indeed, in the *Washington Post* survey, anger was the most reported emotional response of Catholics towards the scandal. It is also true that this poll, which reported the lowest approval rating, was taken immediately after the Dallas meeting (the others came a little later). Moreover, this poll sought to tap how Catholics felt about the way the Church has responded all along to the problem. In short, tempers were still hot when this survey was taken and probing questions on how the Church has responded to the crisis may have colored answers regarding a fair assessment of the final document.

How big is the problem? Philip Jenkins, a Protestant professor at Penn State who has written a book on the subject, estimates that between 1 and 2 percent of priests have engaged in child sexual molestation. The figure for the married Protestant clergy, he says, is between 2 and 3 percent. The *Washington Post* did its own survey of the dioceses. It found that over four decades, fewer than 1.5 percent of the estimated 60,000 or more men who have served in the priesthood were guilty of this crime.

To keep this in perspective, consider that a recent study by an Evangelical publication (*World* magazine) revealed that 30 to 35 percent of ministers of all denominations admit to having sexual relationships (defined as inappropriate touching to sexual intercourse) outside of marriage. Most of the sexual relations took place in pastoral counseling.

In agreement is Rev. Marie M. Fortune, head of the Center for the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence. She led a

study of clergy sexual abuse and concluded that Catholic priests were no more prone to sexual misconduct than ministers. "It's an issue for the Catholics," she said, "but it's an issue for all of us."

Then there is the issue of reporting. We know the bishops failed to report cases of child sexual abuse to the authorities, but what about the clergy in other religions? Bill O'Reilly recently put this question to Westchester, New York, district attorney Jeanine Pirro. Here's the exchange:

Pirro: "Well, I've been a prosecutor for 26 years, and I've never received a report from the church, any church, any clergy, regarding suspected child abuse."

O'Reilly: "Not just the Catholic Church."

Pirro: "Not just the Catholic Church."

O'Reilly: "The Protestants, Jews, everybody."

Pirro: "Anybody, anybody."

What about those who work in the public schools? Professor Charol Shakeshaft of Hofstra University estimates that 15 percent of the country's 50 million schoolchildren will be sexually abused by a teacher or other school employee. And how do school superintendents deal with these issues? In only 1 percent of the cases did the superintendents follow through to ensure that molesting teachers did not continue teaching elsewhere. They simply allow the teachers to move from school district to school district. They call it "passing the trash."

None of this is said to justify anything that a Catholic priest may have done to harm a youngster. We expect more from priests. But it's also true that over the past several months, many Americans—including Catholics—think that somehow the problem of sexual misconduct (especially of minors) is unique to priests. No. We have no monopoly on any sin.

The Catholic Church did not invent this problem. Indeed, unlike so many other institutions in our society, and unlike

what is accepted by the dominant culture, the Church has the answer. It's called restraint.

If every priest had accepted the Church's teachings on human sexuality, we would have been spared the scandal. Sadly, they did not. But let's not forget that most priests have been loyal sons of the Church. It's especially important we not lose sight of this verity in times like this. The priests need our support now more than ever. So let's stand with them and not against them.

OF STEREOTYPES AND HEROES

by

Dr. Richard C. Lukas

Nowhere is the politicization of history and its practitioners more evident than in the recent writings of a number of historians of the Holocaust era. The temptations of glitz, glamour and money seem to have influenced some historians to sensationalize their subjects to get noticed by the media.

Instead of writing history as it really is—filled with complexity and nuance—these historians offer us morality plays. They consist of monocausal interpretations of complicated subjects with the lines of good and evil sharply etched. Too often they allow their biases, prejudices and personal histories to blemish the integrity of their craft.

Today it is intellectually acceptable to target certain individuals and groups for the death of five to six million Jews. Pope Pius XII, once widely praised by Jewish leaders and communities, has now become the most conspicuous target of a number of pope bashers, who have created a quasi-historical

genre of their own. The writings of John Cornwell and David Kertzer are distinguished by their obsession to depict the Papacy in the worst possible light. In his highly publicized tome, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, Daniel Goldhagen wants us to believe that ever since the nineteenth century, the German nation wanted to eliminate the Jews. According to this bizarre interpretation, Hitler was almost an incidental chapter in the history of the Holocaust. Is it now historically acceptable to place collective responsibility on the entire German people that was once employed by anti-Semites against the Jews? It is the same Goldhagen who was allowed by the editors of the *New Republic* to write an article that suggests there is a moral equivalence between the Roman Catholic Church and the Nazi party. Theologian Michael Novak perceptively observed:

"The reason Goldhagen is quite guilty of the charge of anti-Catholicism lies in the breadth and passion of the smears he spreads across a broad history, the distortion and hysteria of his tone, the extremity of his rage and the lack of proportion in his judgments."

No people have been more viciously stereotyped than the Poles. Forgetting that the Poles were Hitler's first victims and that the Nazi-established killing laboratory in Poland would later be used against the Jews and other groups, writers have sought to stereotype the Poles as a nation of willing collaborators with the Nazis in the genocide of the Jews. Despite the fact that Poland ranks first among the nations of the world which rendered help to the Jews during the Holocaust, the Polish role in aiding Jews has been largely ignored or denigrated.

A highly-touted book, *Neighbors*, by Jan T. Gross, claims that Polish Catholics in the village of Jedwabne in northeastern Poland were entirely responsible for killing their Jewish neighbors while the Germans allegedly remained passive bystanders. Even though relations between the two groups had been good before the war, Gross presents a tableau of hundreds of Catholic Poles mindlessly slaughtering Jews because now,

quite suddenly, they despised them and lusted after their property.

Gross, who is a Jewish sociologist, never proves his claim. He prefers to rely on questionable evidence and fails to investigate German archives to substantiate his grave allegation. Despite the fact that *Neighbors* raised more questions than it answered, it is testimony to the enduring power of the stereotype that the National Book Foundation nominated the book for an award.

There is strong evidence, which Gross denies, that the Germans, not the Poles, were the organizers and major executors of the massacre. Only a few Poles, a small criminal element, were involved in the crime. In an interview published in *Inside the Vatican*, Dr. Tomasz Strzembosz, Poland's leading authority on the history of eastern Poland, described Gross's book as "a journalistic work, written without [a] serious scientific basis."

It isn't too surprising that books that sensationalize and distort serious and controversial subjects receive uncritical acceptance by members of the popular media who themselves have internalized the stereotypes of particular individuals and groups. Even respected university publishers have been complicit in printing volumes which do not meet the rigors of historical scholarship and are more akin to propaganda than history.

What we have is the worst kind of revisionism, which treats history like a loose-leaf notebook. Historians remove the pages which disagree with their opinions and substitute those which support their views. Much of the historiography of the Holocaust era reveals a kind of Gresham's law where bad history drives out good history, making it difficult for even professional historians to determine where sensationalism, propaganda and martyrology ends and history begins. History becomes a major casualty and the integrity of the historical

profession is seriously compromised.

There are criminals in every society, including our own. No people have a monopoly on good; no people have a monopoly on evil. Do we further the interests of history by defining a nation by its worst elements? Historians have succeeded in unearthing the evils of the Holocaust era. But they have been far less conscientious and resourceful in revealing to us the thousands of heroes and heroines in all countries of German-occupied Europe who took enormous risks in helping others during the Nazi era.

Many years ago, Rabbi Harold Schulweis remarked that we need heroes and heroines, these exemplars of good, to teach us and our children about goodness. We need them as a counterweight to the evil of Nazism and what it perpetrated upon Jews and gentiles. Historian Istvan Deak echoed the same sentiments in the pages of the New York Review of Books, "We ought to celebrate, more than ever, such heroes, whether Polish saviors of Jews, Jewish ghetto fighters, Bulgarian bishops and politicians, Jehovah's Witnesses, or Polish guerillas, who stood up for their beliefs and died fighting the worst tyrannies in modern history." Historians need to ask themselves today why are the names of Bormann, Himmler, Heydrich, Goebbels and other Nazis universally known and reviled while most of the names of the Christian saviors of Jews have been forgotten?

Among the hundreds of thousands of men and women who should be celebrated for their courage and goodness is Irena Sendler, an extraordinary Polish Catholic woman, who did not have the benefit of the diplomatic position of a Raoul Wallenberg or the financial resources of an Oskar Schindler.

After the Germans forced the Jews of the Polish capital into the Warsaw Ghetto, Sendler brought food, money and medicine to the Jewish people. Wearing an armband with the Star of David to show her solidarity with Warsaw's Jews, she obtained

documents from the city's social welfare department to enable her to move freely within the ghetto without interference from the Germans and Jewish police. Approximately 3,000 Jews received help from Sendler.

Even more remarkable and dangerous was Sendler's work for Żegota, a unique clandestine organization, organized in December, 1942, which assisted thousands of Jews who fled the Ghetto to avoid being transported to the German death camps. Risking automatic execution if they were caught by the Germans, Żegota operatives found shelter, provided food and medical assistance and gave forged documents to Jews under their care.

The primary focus of Żegota's work was to save as many Jewish children as possible. Żegota officials recognized that Irena Sendler was the best qualified person for the daunting task. This fearless woman was largely responsible for saving the lives of 2,600 Jewish children.

Sendler, who had several close calls in her ceaseless efforts to avoid the Gestapo, was finally arrested in October, 1943. Confined to the infamous Pawiak Prison where she was brutally tortured, Sendler expected to be shot by the Germans. But thanks to a well-placed bribe by a Żegota official to a Gestapo officer, Sendler's life was spared. After her release from prison, Sendler lived like the Jewish children she has rescued—in hiding. Still wearing the scars of her beatings by the Germans, the elderly Sendler lives today in obscurity in Warsaw. She deserves her historian and her Spielberg to tell the world her compelling story of sacrifice, courage and goodness.

In time the extremist, sensationalist accounts of Pope Pius XII, the Catholic Church and the Poles during World War II will be winnowed out and more credible interpretations will remain to explain their respective places in modern history. Perhaps a younger generation of historians will discover the

rich resources, as yet largely untapped, of the good people who stood up for their beliefs against totalitarianism and celebrate their remarkable lives.

We will finally get what we should have had all along—history that is custom fit in an off-the-rack world.

Dr. Richard C. Lukas is a retired professor of history. He has taught at universities in Florida, Ohio, and Tennessee and is the author of seven books.

His book, *The Forgotten Holocaust*, went through several editions, including a Polish one, and is now considered a classic. His *Did the Children Cry?* won the *Janusz Korczak Literary Award*, sponsored by the *Anti-Defamation League* and the *Kosciuszko Foundation*.

Both volumes, published by Hippocrene, are available in paperback.

CAUTIONARY NOTE TO BISHOPS ISSUED

Just before the bishops assembled in Dallas for their meeting, we issued the following cautionary note in the form of a news release:

“Even before the meeting begins, some activists have branded it a failure. Consider *Call to Action*. Its spokeswoman, Linda Pieczynski, is quoted as saying, ‘We don’t really trust the bishops to do the right thing and come up with the solutions.’ For those unacquainted with this group, what this means is that because the bishops

are not prepared to overturn virtually every Catholic teaching on sexuality—something Call to Action desperately wants—the fruits of the bishops' efforts are therefore dead on arrival. Given this organization's determination to prejudge the outcome of the bishops' meeting, it makes no sense to even give lip service to their demands. They should simply be dismissed.

"Dignity USA is another 'progressive' Catholic organization that has made up its mind in advance. For this group, the mere mention of the fact that the cases of priestly sexual molestation that have been in the news are mostly of a homosexual nature is, ipso facto, evidence of homophobia. It needs to be said that while most gay priests are not molesters, it remains true that most of the molesters are gay. This is a fact that cannot be ignored any longer. Indeed, the best social science evidence on this subject shows that a man who is drawn to sexual encounters with adolescent boys will have seven to eight times as many victims as other, nonhomosexual abusers.

"Here's another problem. On Friday in Dallas, one of the women who will speak on the subject of 'The Abuse of Women by Catholic Clergy' (a meeting organized by a victims' group), comes to the event with her own baggage. She says she had an on-going affair with a priest beginning in 1984 when she was 18 and he was in his late 30s. In the fall of 1999, she declared victim status and triggered an investigation against the priest. This was a few months after she admitted having another sexual affair with the same priest. To top it off, this 'victim' was married in 1997.

"In short, the bishops should beware of all the agendas that are in the air."

DIOCESAN REVIEW BOARDS NEED RATIONAL CRITERIA

There has been much discussion about the role of diocesan review boards in assessing charges of priestly sexual misconduct. The Catholic League supports lay involvement on diocesan review boards that investigate cases of alleged sexual abuse by priests. But it cautions that such panels are not an elixir and must themselves abide by certain neutral criteria.

There have been many news reports lately on the tendency of parishioners to rally around a priest whom they know and respect once they learn of an accusation against him. This is not hard to understand sociologically but it is nonetheless problematic. These same lay men and women rarely know the face of the alleged victim, especially in cases that go back several years. Thus their perceptions may be skewed.

It is our position that all diocesan review boards should include former victims and/or their relatives. Any person selected to serve on such a review board should recuse himself if he knows either the accused or the alleged victim. Furthermore, because the accused in these situations often seeks to find out who is on the review panel—for the purpose of ingratiating himself with the members—it is necessary to establish institutional safeguards that minimize this from happening.

To show how faulty these boards can be, consider that as late as 1994 Rev. Paul Shanley was declared by the archdiocesan review board in

Boston to be without “evidence of a diagnosable sexual disorder.” One wonders what kind of sexual depravity it would take to label the serial rape of minors a sexual disorder. In short, there is no virtue in being “non-judgmental.” Reason, grounded in common sense, is needed.

WHEN GUIDELINES ARE NOT ENOUGH

Guidelines in dealing with priestly sexual abuse are important but they are no substitute for common sense and common decency. Consider, for example, what has happened in two archdioceses, that of Boston and that of Milwaukee.

In 1977, Rev. Paul Shanley, the Boston pedophile and homosexual, said that when an adult and child have sex, “the adult is not the seducer—the kid is the seducer.” In 1988, Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert Weakland said that when an adult priest and an adolescent have sex, “sometimes not all adolescent victims are so innocent.” In 1994, Weakland said when the teenagers get “a little older” that is when the “squealing comes in.”

In 1981, a woman began complaining to the Archdiocese of Boston about the predatory behavior of Rev. Paul Shanley. The following year, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas V. Daily (now the Bishop of Brooklyn) wrote to Shanley advising him “not to speak at all when she calls but merely to leave her hanging until she hopefully gets discouraged.”

In 1984, three Milwaukee parochial school teachers wrote to Archbishop Rembert Weakland about the

predatory behavior of Rev. Dennis Pecore. Weakland wrote back saying that “any libelous material found in your letter will be scrutinized carefully by our lawyers.” The teachers were then summarily fired. In 1988, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals chastised Weakland’s response to the teachers as “cavalierly insensitive.”

Here are some more disturbing parallels: both Shanley and Pecore were open advocates of homosexuality. In the 1970s, Shanley lectured on the merits of sodomy and sold tapes advocating homosexuality. In 1987, Pecore was named in a \$3 million lawsuit (along with Weakland) for attempting to fire a priest as principal of a parochial school simply because the priest refused to condone the homosexual lifestyle. Under Cardinal Law, Shanley was moved from parish to parish. Under Archbishop Weakland, Pecore (twice convicted of sexual assault) was moved from parish to parish.

This is a problem no guidelines can resolve. What is needed is a Christian response to allegations and fidelity to the Church’s teachings.

Judging from the expressed resolve of the bishops coming out of the Dallas meeting, we firmly believe that instances like this will not be repeated. We highlight these cases only to show that bureaucratic directives can only do so much good.

HIGHLIGHTS OF HETERODOXY

There are many Catholic organizations and publications that reject the Church’s teachings on sexuality. We’ve been

tracking what they've been saying in this time of crisis and, predictably, the voices of dissent want to turn the Church upside down and inside out. Here's a sampling of some of the more inane comments we've come across.

Call to Action is generally regarded as being at the forefront of "progressive" Catholic activism.

- On May 29, the group put out a news release listing its recommendations on what the bishops need to do. It came out against "zero tolerance" for priests who molest children.
- On June 16, following the Dallas meeting, it criticized the bishops for not endorsing "zero tolerance." "This is not the zero tolerance that the Catholic people want and deserve," is what Call to Action said in a news release.

We have a recommendation: Call to Action should adopt an internal policy expressing zero tolerance for lying.

Frances Kissling claims to be a Catholic but there is good reason to believe that she excommunicated herself when she ran abortion clinics illegally in Mexico. At any rate, her well-funded fax machine of an "organization," Catholics for a Free Choice, still gets some attention, though not nearly as much as it once did.

- In April and again in May, Kissling urged the U.N. to investigate sexual misconduct by priests.

No one paid any attention to her either time. But we'd like to see the IRS investigate her.

- During the Dallas meeting, Kissling said, "It is clear that the policy which will be approved leaves too much power in the hands of the bishops and too little in control of the faithful."

That may be true, but it's a moot point for her: she's not one of the faithful.

- Also during the Dallas meeting, Kissling declared, “I want a priesthood that has heterosexuals, homosexuals, women, married people, unmarried people, temporary priests. I think we could solve this problem if people were only priests to some extent for only ten years.”

And we think the idea of term limits is so good we should begin with her: having been Ms. Queen of Abortion for decades, Kissling ought to resign immediately.

Catholics Speak Out is the brainchild of Sister Maureen Fiedler. And what they speak out about is of no interest to most Catholics, much less non-Catholics. But they do have a friend in columnist Emily Minor. Here’s what Emily had to say about one of the group’s officials, Rea Howarth:

- “Every day, all day, Howarth thinks about the things that separate many of today’s women from the church. It’s beyond contraception and divorce, abortion and female priests. It’s the notion—the reality—that politics and reform are not discussed with women. Ever. End of story.”

Maybe Rea should stop thinking about things that get her down every day, all day. On this business about no one ever discussing politics with Rea, we have good news for her: we’d be only too happy to put her in touch with Jerry Springer.

Dignity is a homosexual activist group of men and women who profess to be Catholic even though they reject the Church’s teaching on homosexuality. They have been quite exercised over reports that most of the molesters are gay. Marianne Duddy is the executive director of Dignity and here is what she said about those cardinals who have expressed concerns about so many homosexuals in the priesthood:

- “These irresponsible comments have done untold harm to thousands of people, creating a new class of victims in this horrible scandal. We continue to demand a full retraction of all statements linking homosexuality and child abuse.”

And we will continue to say that there is a word in the English language for male-on-male sex (which is the case in 82 percent of reported cases of sexual abuse by priests). It is called homosexuality.

The *National Catholic Reporter* has been promoting, and celebrating, dissent within the Catholic Church for decades. Here is what its editor, Tom Roberts, had to say about the scandal:

· “Within this deep embarrassment and this awful moment for the church are the seeds for growth and reform. And what I think whether bishops are wont to admit it or not, those reforms are along the lines of what the people in Call to Action have been discussing for a long time.”

What is truly embarrassing is to read that the answer to sexual permissiveness among some priests is to adopt a sexually permissive philosophy that justifies it. It's on the order of saying the answer to theft is to legalize it.

New Ways Ministry was founded in 1977 by Sister Jeannine Gramick and Rev. Robert Nugent. In 1999, after it became clear that both of them openly defied the Church's teachings on sexuality, they were banned by the Vatican from working with homosexuals. Their answer to the problem of priestly sexual abuse is to promote the homosexual agenda. At their most recent national conference, several speakers had specific recommendations. Our favorite came from Helen Deines.

· Helen Deines is a professor from Spalding University. She wants to stamp out what she calls “heterosexism.” To this end, she recommended that we stop celebrating Mother's Day and Father's Day; presumably, they make kids who have two mommies or two daddies feel uncomfortable.

Deines is right about this but she didn't go far enough. We need to eliminate Martin Luther King Day because it makes racists feel uncomfortable. We need to eliminate President's

Day because it makes Al Gore feel uncomfortable. We need to eliminate the Fourth of July because it makes traitors feel uncomfortable. We need to eliminate Labor Day because it makes bums feel uncomfortable. We need to eliminate Thanksgiving because it makes PETA feel uncomfortable. And we need to eliminate Christmas because it makes the ACLU feel uncomfortable.

ORTHODOXY AFFIRMED

Need some relief from this stuff? Here's what William Donohue said on the "Alan Keyes show" on June 13:

"If there's a Catholic teacher on a [Catholic] college campus right now—I don't care if it's a priest or a layperson—who doesn't accept the Catholic Church's teachings on human sexuality, on abortion and homosexuality, they have no business being there teaching, any more than you would have a racist or anti-Semitic priest or teacher.

"The fact of the matter is, we are far more tolerant of people who teach the wonders of homosexuality and abortion on college campuses and indeed in the seminaries, than we do for those who are anti-Semitic and racist. If we start treating people who think that freedom is genital liberation, the same way we do the bigots, we'll make some progress."

RULE OF LAW APPLIES—EVEN TO THE CHURCH

Some who are targeting the Catholic Church in the wake of the sex abuse scandal are seeking to exploit the law to make their case. We addressed this issue in the following news release:

“In some parts of the nation, local D.A.’s are seeking to obtain the personnel records of priests extending back decades ago. But if their real interest is protecting the kids, why are the clergy of other religions being given a pass? The rate of pedophilia among priests is comparable to that found among ministers, rabbis and others. Moreover, why are the records of teachers not sought? Or social workers? Or therapists?

“Then we have the spectacle of victims’ rights groups asking that the statute of limitations be lifted in cases of priestly sexual abuse. But there is a reason why the law provides for a statute of limitations—it is called fairness. How can someone realistically be expected to defend himself when he is being charged with a crime that allegedly occurred several decades ago? And since when did priests become second-class citizens: if the statute of limitations is not being invalidated for everyone else, why should an exception be made for priests? The Fourteenth Amendment clause ensuring equal protection before the law applies to everyone.

“Now we learn that a class-action lawsuit has been filed to void the secrecy provisions in all settlements signed by those involved in such cases. Notwithstanding the fact that such a lawsuit is bound to fail (this is the work of steeple-chasing lawyer Jeffrey Anderson), the most absurd part of this is that the alleged victims

want the secrecy part of their agreement lifted but insist they have every right to keep the money they got. In short, they want a selective interpretation of the law so they can go on TV bashing the Church while hoarding their stash. It would be as if the Church asked for its money back while demanding that the secrecy provision remain in force.

“No wrongdoing by the Church justifies attempts to plunder its resources by rewriting the law. This is the work of bandits disguised as attorneys.”