

# THE PURSUIT OF JUSTICE? OR PRIESTS?

In the aftermath of the Dallas meeting of U.S. bishops, there has been a mad rush on the part of lawmakers to treat clergy the same way non-clergy are treated in cases involving the sexual molestation of minors. Some oddities have appeared, and it is worth noting who the players are.

Over the summer there were two different but related, stories on priestly sexual misconduct printed on the same day in the *New York Times* and *Newsday*. The reports raised serious questions regarding the way this problem is being handled by the Church, and the way New York lawmakers are dealing with it.

In the Times, we learned that a bill that would add the word “clergy” to a list of professionals required by law to report cases of suspected child abuse has run into unexpected difficulty. It was not Catholics who were throwing up roadblocks, it was the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) and Family Planning Advocates (the lobbying arm of abortion-rights organizations like Planned Parenthood).

These groups were upset that the law might require reporting cases of statutory rape and might force rape-crisis counselors to break their confidentiality agreements. Donna Lieberman, the director of the NYCLU, said the original intent of the bill was not intended to cover all instances of child abuse.

*Newsday* reported that half the priests on Long Island who have had their faculties removed have never been found guilty of anything; allegations alone were deemed enough.

We told the media the following: “It is ironic that the civil libertarians and their pro-abortion allies are worried that zero tolerance might create difficulties for young girls

impregnated by their older boyfriends. But they have no problem holding the Catholic Church responsible for sexual abuse committed by priests. Even worse, some dioceses are now overreacting by taking punitive measures against priests who are assumed innocent until proven guilty. It is about time everyone got on the same page.”