

# TRYING TO OPEN THE SEAL

Legislation has been introduced in the Rhode Island state legislature that would force the clergy to reveal private confessions in cases of child abuse or neglect. The bill would amend the "Privileged Communications to Clergymen" law which stipulates that religious officials cannot be forced to reveal the contents of private conversations without the other person's consent.

Msgr. Robert Newbold of the Diocese of Rhode Island restated the canon law on this subject, saying that "A priest is not permitted to break confessional seal." He added that the proposed bill does not distinguish between a priest who gives advice and one who hears confession.

The latest word on this issue is that the legislation will not make it out of committee. The Catholic League has pledged its support to the diocese and is particularly interested in learning of any anti-Catholic comment that might be made by the advocates of the bill.