

WHO WANTS CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS? THE DIOCESES OR THE VICTIMS?

There is a story in today's *New York Times* about an attorney who defended the Diocese of Galveston-Houston against those who filed suits alleging clergy sexual abuse. "It was always the church, [Robert P. Scamardo] said, that insisted on inserting confidentiality clauses in the settlements—never the victims, as many bishops have contended."

Yesterday, AP reported on a new twist in the ongoing story of the Diocese of Portland, Maine, which is being sued by the owners of the *Portland Press Herald* on the grounds that the state's Freedom of Access law permits it to access the names of dead priests charged with sexual misconduct. The diocese opined that alleged victims may want to protect their anonymity by joining the fight. To which Paul Kendrick, co-founder of the Maine chapter of Voice of the Faithful, replied, "In my mind, the church is the abuser here, and for the diocese to contact the victims is totally inappropriate. For the same institution that covered up these crimes to ask for help keeping these secrets sounds almost like witness tampering."

Catholic League president William Donohue commented as follows:

"It is nothing if not preposterous to assert that it is the bishops who *always* push for confidentiality clauses in settlements. Not only does this fly in the face of the testimony of many victims, even those victims who are now spokesmen for victims' groups deny the validity of this claim. It would be more accurate to say that in most instances it was the victim's parents who sought to protect

the privacy of their son. And with good reason—they sought to spare him further damage.

“It is also striking to note that none other than Paul Kendrick has argued that the names of victims should not be disclosed in the Portland case. Yet he has the audacity to attribute malice to the diocese for merely seeking to rally the victims so as to protect their anonymity.

“It is a sick sign of the times when celebrities charged with molesting boys are cheered while even dead priests are being slammed in public.”