

# Statement of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy Regarding the Anti-Catholic Legislation in the State of Washington, USA

**San Diego, May 6, 2024** – The Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, a national association of priests and deacons, categorically condemns Senate Bill 5375, signed into law by Washington State Governor Ferguson on May 2, 2025, which forces Catholic priests to break the sacramental seal if a penitent reveals information about possible child abuse in the course of a confession. The legislation further asserts that a clergyman can be imprisoned if he refuses to violate the sacred confidentiality of the sacrament.

Rev. John Trigilio, President of the Confraternity of Catholic Clergy, said that “Criminal prosecution must rely on constitutional methods to convict rather than violate the freedom of religion. District Attorneys and civil courts must respect and uphold the First Amendment (freedom of religion) as equally as the Fourth and Fifth Amendments (due process; no illegal search and seizure; no self-incrimination)”

It is to be noted that the Governor and State of Washington are not imposing the same demands for breach of confidentiality on physicians or lawyers – just on priests. While the heinous crime of abusing minors must be vehemently condemned, the seal of confession is categorically different than other types of professional confidentiality. It is inviolable by divine law. Doctor/Patient and Attorney/Client privilege are honored and defended in law. So also, the absolute right of Priest/Penitent must be vigorously safeguarded as well.

Both the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#1467) and the Code of Canon Law (#983, 1388) unequivocally state that the sacramental seal is a matter of faith as well as of discipline. The priest is forbidden to reveal either the identity or the contents of any confession. He must risk imprisonment or even death rather than betray the sacred trust. Furthermore, any priest who breaks the seal incurs automatic excommunication reserved to the Roman Pontiff.

As Catholic clergy committed to both the protection of children and the integrity of the sacraments, we affirm that these commitments are not in conflict. We encourage penitents to voluntarily report crimes to proper authorities, while maintaining the sacred and inviolable seal of confession. It is not a question of either/or, as if the state must choose between defending children or respecting religion. It has been and can continue to be both/and. Neither obligation should be in jeopardy.

Contact: Fr. John Trigilio, President, Confraternity of Catholic Clergy  
Phone: [\(619\) 800-8672](tel:6198008672)  
Mobile: [\(814\) 580-5082](tel:8145805082)  
Email: [catholic.clergy@gmail.com](mailto:catholic.clergy@gmail.com)