

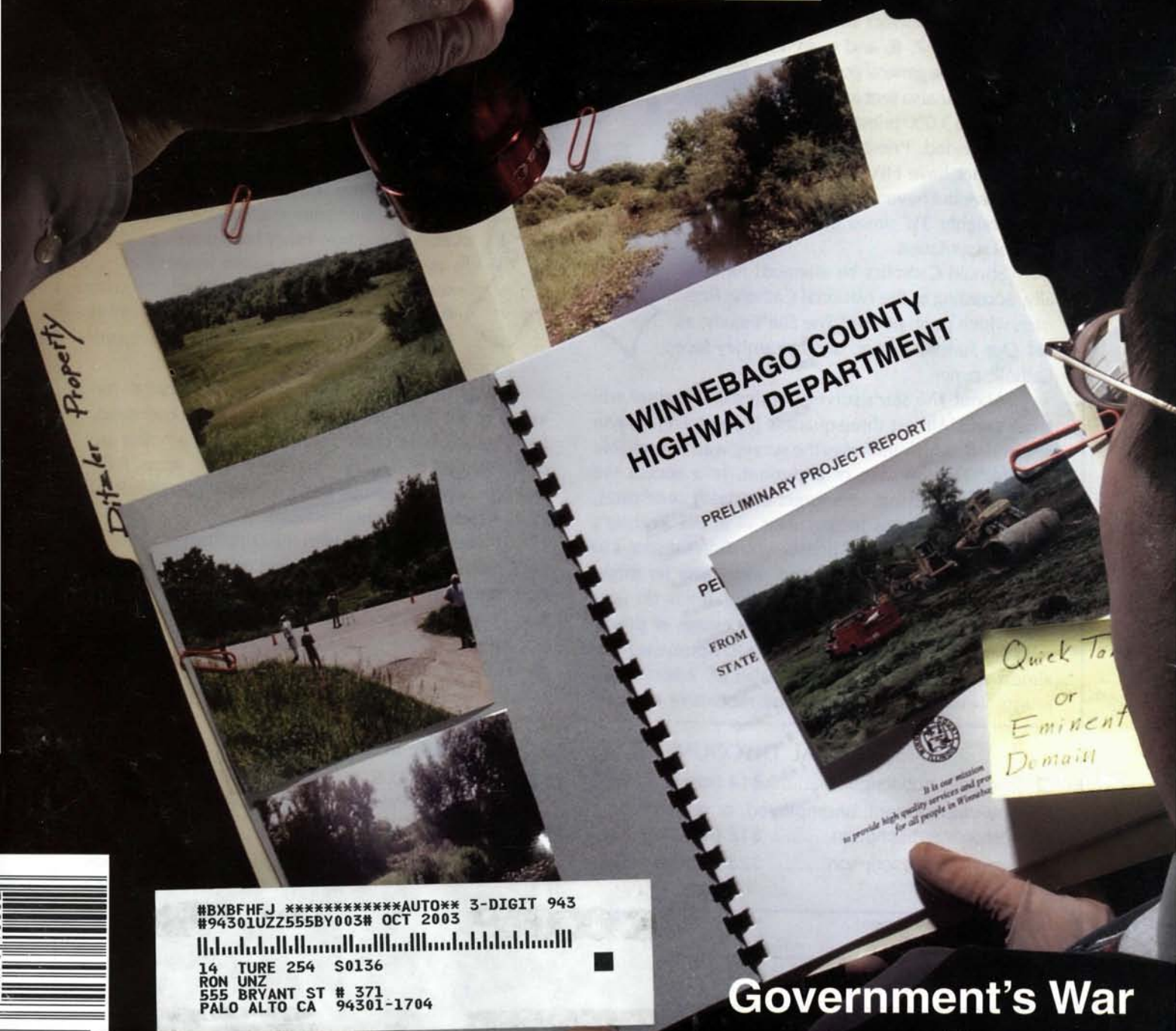
Chronicles

April 2001

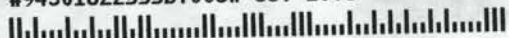
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DEGENERATE PRIESTS: Deal With the Problem !

Recently *The Kansas City Star* reported on a major study it conducted on homosexuality and AIDS cases in the Catholic priesthood (the series ran in *Knight Ridder* papers nationwide). *The Star's* now-famous verdict, based on death certificates of priests and other sources, was: "it appears that priests are dying of AIDS at a rate at least four times that of the general U.S. population...." According to *The Star*, this is a conservative estimate, for other statistics and experts put the rate at 7, 8, and even 11 times that of the general population.

The Star also sent a confidential survey to 3,000 priests, of whom 801 responded. Priests who said they "either have HIV or AIDS or might have but haven't been tested" were roughly 3½ times that of the general population.

Should Catholics be alarmed? Not really, according to the *National Catholic Register*, which pooh-poohed *The Star's* study, as did *Our Sunday Visitor*, another smiley-faced Catholic paper.

About *The Star's* survey of priests, a *Register* editorial said: "Almost three-quarters [73 percent]...never responded, which indicates the survey wasn't a reliable sample." For the sake of argument, let's accept the *Register's* nay-saying, let's forget the death certificates, and let's go so far as to speculate — in the *Register's* favor — that of the 2,199 priests who didn't respond to the survey, none has AIDS and none fears he might (which of course is extremely unlikely). If you do your math, that would mean that the percentage of priests who have AIDS or are engaging in AIDS-prone activity almost matches the general population. Yikes! If our priests — whom we expect to be *models* of Catholic

morality and who take a vow of celibacy — are almost as degenerate as the general population, we've got a huge problem! Even if they're only half as degenerate, we've got a major problem. After all, they're *priests*!

The *Los Angeles Times* has reported that, according to Linkup, a group supporting victims of sexually immoral clergy, the Catholic Church nationwide "has paid \$1 billion in lawsuit judgments and settlements since 1985." That's a staggering sum, most of it coming out of the pockets of the long-suffering and bewildered laity. Just imagine how many prolife projects could have been funded, how many *beautiful* churches could have been erected, how many missionaries could have been sent overseas, and how many hard-working Catholic parents could have gotten financial aid to send their children to Catholic schools with those billion dollars! And the scandals, which just keep coming, cast unwarranted suspicion on our faithful, moral priests.

When Catholic papers can be perceived as trying to shoot the messenger conveying the bad news, few Catholics are reassured. Moreover, Catholics are sick and tired of denials, damage-control, spins, P.R., and episcopal cover-ups and hush-hush pay-offs. Real Catholics demand a housecleaning!

If you want to deal with the crippling problems in the Church — not just duplicitous priests but liturgical desecration, church demolition palmed off as "renovation," bogus Catholic "education," and New Age "nuns" — subscribe to the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, an orthodox Catholic monthly magazine that takes no prisoners.

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