

Thomas Kelly

Many allegations, little paper trail

Thomas Kelly allegedly began abusing kids in Chicago soon after his 1962 ordination. But unlike cases of many other priests who abused in the Archdiocese, there is little in the way of a paper trail. What does exist, however, is telling.

In 1967, Kelly corresponded with then-Archbishop John Cody, defending or explaining sex abuse allegations that victims had lodged against Kelly. Two days later, Kelly was sent to live with Fr. Frank Murphy at St. Catherine of Genoa, who was considered the “right fit” for the predator cleric. In 1968, Kelly wrote that he had “avoided scandal” in Northlake and begged for another chance to be a good priest.

Kelly had numerous assignments throughout Chicago, many only lasting a short period of time, a reoccurring theme with child-molesting priests.

Kelly died in 1990.

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS –THOMAS KELLY

1962– Ordained

7/7/62 - Assistant Pastor, St. John Vianney

1963 According to a 2007 report, Kelly abused a minor one time in 1963. (AOC 003480)

1965 According to a 1993 report, Kelly abused a minor on several occasions. The abuse consisted of fondling the survivor’s genitals, taking him to movies, giving him alcohol, and showing him pornography. The survivor shared a bed with Kelly during an overnight in the rectory. (AOC 003492)

1966 According to a 2006 letter, Kelly abused a minor in approximately 1966 or 1967. (AOC 003485)

10/23/67 Letter from the Archbishop (Cody) (unsigned) to Kelly saying that he received Kelly’s earlier letter with an explanation of the allegations made against him. The letter also schedules a meeting between Kelly and the Archbishop. (AOC 003525)

10/23/67 Memo to Msgr. Byrne stating “what are you planning to do about this Father Kelly.” Signed JPC (AOC 003526)

10/25/67 Memo from Msgr. Byrne to “your eminence” saying that Fr. Kelly will go to Fr. Frank Murphy, who is the right pastor for Fr. Kelly. (AOC 003527)

11/7/67 – Assistant Pastor, St. Catherine of Genoa

- 1967 According to a 2006 report, Kelly sexually abused a minor in approximately 1967 or 1968. The abuse consisted of Kelly fondling the survivor and providing him with alcohol. The abuse took place in the rectory at St. Catherine of Genoa parish. (AOC 003482)
- 2/14/68 Letter from Kelly to “Rev. and Monsignor” saying that “it does not seem that there has been any public scandal” in Northlake. He also notes that he has been faithful to his spiritual exercises and that he is convinced that there is no real problem “as long as vigilance and common sense prevail.” (AOC 003529)**
- 11/29/68 Letter from Kelly to “Your Eminence” asking for one last chance to be a good priest. Says “you very aptly compared the situation to alcoholism” and that recovery is possible. Also states that he will seek psychiatric help immediately. “I do realize your position and know what a risk you would be taking by giving me one more chance.” “A public scandal while I was a priest would be much worse, not only for us, but for the Church as well.” (AOC 003530)**
- 12/6/68 Letter from the Archbishop to Kelly acknowledging his 11/29/68 letter and thanking him for his “priestly cooperation” in this delicate matter. (AOC 003531)
- 1968 According to a later report, Kelly sexually abused a minor in 1968 or 1969. The abuse consisted of fondling, masturbation and oral sex. Another boy was present and Kelly attempted to fondle the other boy. (AOC 003495)
- 1971 According to 2004 report, Kelly sexually abused a minor between 1971 and 1972. The abuse took place at Little Flower parish and included fondling and oral sex. Kelly also provided the survivor with alcohol and cigarettes. (AOC 003451)
- 1971 According to a 2008 report, Kelly sexually abused a minor between 1971 and 1972. The abuse took place at St. Catherine of Genoa and consisted of fondling under the child’s clothes. “Kelly admitted to him that he had been in trouble before with the Bishop because of sexual abuse.” The victim also reported that an older woman greeted him at the rectory when he visited Fr. Kelly. (AOC 003517)

6/8/72 – Vicarius Cooperator, St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower), Chicago, IL

3/21/73 – Assistant Pastor, Queen of the Apostles

6/7/78 – Associate Pastor, St. Kieran, Chicago Heights, IL

6/9/80 – Associate Pastor, St. James, Saulk Village, IL

6/10/86 – Associate Pastor, Our Lady of Knock

6/5/90 – Deceased

- 3/18/93 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. Catherine of Genoa. Abuse consisted of Kelly rubbing his penis on the survivor, fondling him, and masturbating him. (AOC 003501)
- 4/4/02 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to Little Flower parish. The abuse took place in the rectory and consisted of oral sex. Kelly also provided the survivor with alcohol and marijuana. (AOC 003502)
- 5/18/02 Professional Fitness Review Board meeting minutes summarize the review of allegations of abuse by Kelly. The Board reviewed all written and oral information, including a 1993 allegation against Kelly, and concluded that there is “reasonable cause to suspect that sexual misconduct with a minor did occur.” (AOC 003474- AOC 003476)
- 6/17/02 Letter from Cardinal George to Kathleen Leggdas, the Professional Fitness Review Administrator, saying that he accepts the Board’s finding that there is reasonable cause to suspect that sexual misconduct with a minor did occur by Kelly. (AOC 003465)
- 6/26/02 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. John Vianney parish. Abuse consisted of Kelly fondling, masturbating and performing oral sex on the survivor. Kelly also provided the survivor with alcohol. (AOC 003464)
- 1/21/04 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. Catherine of Genoa and Little Flower parish. The abuse consisted of Kelly performing oral sex and providing alcohol to the survivor. (AOC 003488)
- 2/18/04 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. John Vianney parish. Abuse consisted of Kelly performing oral sex on the survivor and the survivor staying over night in the rectory. Kelly also gave alcohol to the survivor. (AOC 003452)
- 11/8/05 Letter from Vicar for Priests, Rev. Edward Grace, to (redacted) stating that the allegations against Kelly were presented to the Archdiocese only after Fr. Kelly had died. (AOC 003486)
- 8/30/06 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. John Vianney. The abuse consisted of Kelly performing oral sex on the survivor. This occurred approximately 10 times. (AOC 003493)

- 11/19/08 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. John Vianney parish. Abuse consisted of fondling and oral sex. (AOC 003521)
- 11/21/08 Report of sexual abuse by Kelly when he was assigned to St. John Vianney parish. Abuse consisted of fondling and Kelly rubbing his penis against the survivor. Kelly also used the survivor's hand to masturbate himself. (AOC 003523)