

# Chicago Priest Indicted For Sex Abuse; Archdiocese (Laity) Pays For Defense

By FR. CHARLES C. FIORE

CHICAGO — As expected (but in Chicago's politically weighted atmosphere, "nothing is certain until the jury sings"), Fr. Robert E. Mayer, pastor until July of St. Odilo Parish in west suburban Berwyn, Ill. (Archdiocese of Chicago), was indicted. Wednesday, Dec. 4th, on four counts of aggravated criminal sexual abuse.

According to a spokesman for the state attorney's office for Cook County (Chicago), the indictment alleges that Mayer touched the

genitalia of a 14-year-old girl, a student in the parish school, during a meeting in the church rectory in January. The girl, who came forward during parish hearings after a young man had initially accused Mayer of sexual misconduct,

was in the eighth grade, and was preparing for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

In Illinois, aggravated sexual abuse is a Class 2 felony carrying a maximum penalty of three to (Continued on Page 11)

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seven years in prison. Mayer's arraignment was set for Thursday, Dec. 19th.

With the announcement of this first criminal indictment amid six recent removals of priests (including Mayer) by the Archdiocese for alleged sexual abuse of children, State Attorney Jack O'Malley, a first-term Republican up for reelection next spring, issued a statement insisting that his office takes "allegations of child abuse very seriously," and requesting that "anyone with information about such a crime should be confident that this office will investigate it thoroughly." Several Democrats have already announced their intentions to oppose O'Malley.

## Internal Handling

There was no word from O'Malley's office, however, whether it was investigating the five other recently removed priests for possible criminal indictments. At the time it named and removed four of them, the Archdiocese announced it had "substantiated" charges against them.

The fifth, Fr. William Cloutier, already is the subject of a civil complaint alleging that in 1979 he sexually abused several boys and threatened them with a gun, in south suburban Oak Forest. O'Malley's office did not indicate if it was preparing obstruction of justice charges against officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago and the Oak Forest police chief, Alvin Lexow, on the basis of a statement by Oak Forest Police Sergeant Ralph Pillot to WMAQ-TV reporter Mary Ann Ahern. Pillot then said that in 1979 he gave Chief

Lexow an 18-page report of his investigation of the Cloutier charges (*The Wanderer*, Dec. 12th, p. 6). Lexow admitted in the same TV report that not only had he not given Pillot's report to the state attorney for prosecution in 1979, as the law requires, but had turned it over instead to archdiocesan officials for "internal handling."

Similarly, another archdiocesan priest, Fr. Robert Lutz, remains pastor at St. Norbert's Church, Northbrook, while also the subject of two civil complaints — one in federal district court — alleging sexual harassment of a woman principal at St. Mary Star of the Sea Parish School, Chicago, one of Lutz's earlier assignments; and (with the then-principal of St. Norbert's parochial school, Alice Halpin, an ex-nun) the sexual abuse of a six-year-old male student four years ago.

## "Working Diligently"

In the wake of Fr. Mayer's indictment, Cardinal Bernardin issued a statement:

"The sexual abuse of minors is a tragedy, especially when Church personnel are involved. The indictment of Fr. Mayer underscores the seriousness of such charges. I pray that *through the judicial process*, justice will be achieved for all those involved in this particular case. In addition to cooperation with civil authorities, the Archdiocese is working diligently to safeguard our young people and to ensure the confidence of their families" (italics added).

A spokesman for the Archdiocese announced in November that the special commission named by Bernardin to investigate pedophilia charges against priests would con-

clude its work "after Thanksgiving." But no additional priests have been named since mid-November (*The Wanderer*, Dec. 12th, p. 6) and the commission had not concluded its work by Dec. 10th. Some Chicago sources speculate that the commission may delay the naming and removal of any additional priests until after Christmas, so as not to further upset Chicago Catholics before Christmas when, traditionally, church donations are generous.

## Outrageous Sums Of Money

Not calculated to please Chicago Catholics, however, was the announcement by Sr. Joy Clough, archdiocesan spokesman, that although Fr. Mayer had retained his own counsel — heavyweight criminal defense attorney Patrick A. Tuite — the Archdiocese is "assisting" with Mayer's legal fees "because of the unique relationship between a diocese and its priests" when one of them has "a need."

Meanwhile, Mayer's attorney, Tuite, stated that Mayer would plead not guilty.

Contradicting Sr. Clough, in the *In Brief* column of *The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin* (Dec. 5th), Attorney Tuite said bluntly, "The Archdiocese is paying. I'm charging them the same thing I charge everybody else." \$300 an hour, according to the *Bulletin*.

The *Bulletin* also quoted Sr. Clough — "the nun in charge of public relations" [for the Archdiocese] — as "putting it more delicately: The Church is assisting Fr. Mayer with legal fees. The feeling is that that is all that needs to be discussed."

Hardly. When told of Mayer hiring of the high-profile Tuite and the Archdiocese paying him \$300 per hour to defend Mayer, a prominent California Catholic activist sputtered, "That's outrageous! Once again the pockets of the faithful are being picked by the fraudulent to defend the faithless! How long before the Bishops get rid of their P. R. (public relations) staff and put the Gospel into practice?"

Local Catholics, too, expressed dismay that their contributions are subsidizing Mayer's legal defense at a time when the Archdiocese has closed schools and churches for apparent lack of funds. A number have written to Apostolic Nuncio Agostino Cacciavillan (editor's note: see address below), enclosing photocopies of earlier *Wanderer* stories about the Chicago priest-pedophile problem and asking for Bernardin's removal.

In a Dec. 5th story, *Chicago Sun-Times* reporters Ray Long and Daniel J. Lehmann noted that the last Chicago priest to be indicted and convicted of sexual misconduct was Fr. Robert D. Friese. Formerly a chaplain at Maryville Academy in Des Plaines, an orphanage and home for troubled youth, Friese was convicted on Jan. 15th, 1986 on three charges of sexually molesting a 13-year-old boy resident there. Friese is currently on leave, and works as a researcher at the University of Illinois-Chicago Child Care Program which trains students to work in institutions for disturbed children.

## Where The Buck Stops

With an eye to Christmas collec-

tions throughout the Archdiocese. VOCAL — a suburban Chicago group dedicated to aiding victims of clergy abuse and their families (see below and *The Wanderer*, Dec. 5th, p. 3) — prepared to distribute "The Buck Stops Here 'Reserved Notes'" for local Catholics to use in Christmas collections in place of regular donations. Boldly headlined, "Please, we need accountability!" the "dollars" list the organization's name, address, and phone number.

With them VOCAL includes a one-page fact sheet that outlines the moral and financial dimensions of the quagmire in which the Church in the United States finds itself because of its failure to deal quickly and honestly with priest pedophiles.

VOCAL's "the buck stops here" fact sheet ends with the words: "Let this 'dollar' note serve as your voice to the institutional Church [in collection baskets] on Christmas Day, that your usual donation has been forwarded to an *accountable* child advocacy organization, service, or agency of your choice. . . ."

### An Example?

In the midst of the continuing scandal as it played out in local and national media, there was laughter, too.

Historians are sometimes guilty of political "revisionism," but usually awhile after the events in question.

Veteran *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist, Irv Kupcinet, a cigar-chomping, pro-abortion malapropster, who regularly gives space to celebrity-puffing, unwittingly provided comic-relief when, on Nov. 26th, he published what had all the earmarks of a chancery public relations blurb. Wrote Kup:

"For years Joseph Cardinal Bernardin has been asking the National Conference of Catholic Bishops to adopt a policy to deal with priests with sexual problems. To avoid embarrassment and controversy, the bishops failed to act. But now Bernardin has established his own policy by acting forthrightly with the dismissal of priests with sexual problems. . . . Bernardin thus established guidelines for other bishops to adopt in handling priests who violate their trust."

There was the distinct smell of incense burning under the accompanying photo of the Archbishop, with its caption:

"Joseph Cardinal Bernardin: An example for other U.S. bishops."

Said one Chicago priest who knows both Kupcinet and Bernardin, "Where do the other bishops send money to erect the statue?"

Readers who wish to express their concerns about priest pedophiles and the failure of dioceses to cooperate with civil authorities in removing them, may write: Most Rev. Agostino Cacciavillan, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio, 3339 Massachusetts Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C., 20008.

For information about VOCAL and to obtain a sample of "The Buck Stops Here," write or call: VOCAL, P.O. Box 1268, Wheeling, Ill., 60090, 708-202-0242.