

BOUNDARIES AND CONCERNS

This section explores issues of boundaries and other concerns of the Board arising from its findings. One of our premises is that the friars were teachers as well as guardians, and as such, should be held to the rules of conduct for teachers and guardians. From that viewpoint, an obvious question that arises is how abuse of this magnitude could have gone on unchecked. There is no simple answer. One must consider the historical context; for example, the institutional changes that occurred after Vatican II, e.g., the shift from a system using a prefect of discipline to one employing class moderators. One must also recognize that at the seminary there existed a complex dynamic which was contributed to by a familial atmosphere; by attitudes of trust among the friars and towards their respective areas of responsibility; by secretiveness and cleverness of offenders; and by nondisclosure and internalization of experiences of abuse by the victims.

It must also be stated that within this system, over the years, many rules were broken: rules governing the conduct of guardians and teachers, and rules both explicit (canonical and constitutional law) and implicit in the religious life. Perpetrators had to use their authority as priests to isolate, intimidate, confuse and manipulate these young boys in order to satisfy their own needs and ensure silence. From the information provided by the students with whom we had contact, it appears to us that at times there was non-communication, denial, avoidance, and lack of sophistication about sexual issues among faculty and staff at St. Anthony's. Further, students were provided no clear understanding of what constituted appropriate behavior of their caretakers. This allowed the offenders to victimize students without any apparent fear of repercussion.

Private Rooms: Although the Board of Inquiry was assured that no student was ever allowed into the private rooms of the friars, the converse of this was heard time and time again from victims during the investigation. Despite both physical and psychological barriers (doors and rules), the perpetrators often molested students who they brought into their private rooms. One offender had a private room in a house next to the seminary where he had children in his room overnight. The Board learned that on several occasions, two young boys, nonseminarians, were at the friars' table for both dinner and breakfast the following morning.

Alcohol/Drugs: While some friars expelled students for drinking, others allowed drinking in their private rooms; one friar actually bought alcohol for students and permitted them to "sleep it off" in his room. One student reported that a lay teacher encouraged him to try a drug (amyl nitrate) in his private room.

Medical Exams: As indicated previously, a substantial amount of sexual abuse was perpetrated under the guise of medical examination and treatment. It is clear that friars were not doctors or nurses and should not have been allowed to act as such. There was an available on-call physician who could have been used in these instances

Massage: The Board was made aware of the fact that massages of students by faculty members, not all of whom were perpetrators, was an accepted occurrence during the latter years of the Seminary's operation. Given the age of the students and the power relationship between student and friar or teacher, it is doubtful that a true informed consent to a legitimate massage could

have been made. A full body massage poses a delicate and tricky situation, even if both participants are adults. Where a minor is the intended recipient, it is a decision to be made by his parents. Further, the instances of massage at the seminary, albeit many may have been performed in a completely nonsexual manner, created a blurred boundary which allowed perpetrators an avenue to exploit.

Physical Abuse: As mentioned, some students told of being beaten until they were bruised and bleeding. One student was voted "Most Beaten" by his classmates. Another student told of being backhanded by a friar so hard that he was lifted up and knocked off the cart upon which he was sitting. One teacher kept a supply of yardsticks to break over students' backs during class. Such physical intimidation was one tool used by this friar to help keep silent the students he sexually abused. Another student was dumped upside down into a garbage can by a lay faculty member. This kind of physical misconduct towards students blurred boundaries and diluted any sense that students had a right to the security and sanctity of their own bodies.

Student Sexual Abuse: Student-to-student sexual abuse was similar to the abuse perpetrated by friars in that it often involved an upper classman as perpetrator and a younger, smaller student as victim. Clearly, students did not feel there was a safe adult with whom to discuss issues of sexuality or masculinity; and particularly to whom they could turn for help in warding off or coping with the effects of sexual advances by another student.