

Section II

Overview of the Sexual Abuse by Archdiocese Priests

It is hard to think of a crime more heinous, or more deserving of strict penalties and an unlimited statute of limitations, than the sexual abuse of children. This is especially so when the perpetrators are priests – men who exploit the clergy’s authority and access to minors, as well as the trust of faithful families, to prey on children in order to gratify perverted urges. After reviewing thousands of documents from Archdiocese files and hearing statements and testimony from over a hundred witnesses – including Archdiocese managers, priests, abuse victims, and experts on the Church and child abuse – we, the Grand Jurors, were taken aback by the extent of sexual exploitation within the Philadelphia Archdiocese. We were saddened to discover the magnitude of the calamity in terms of the abuse itself, the suffering it has caused, and the numbers of victims and priests involved.

The Jurors heard testimony that will stay with us for a very long time, probably forever. We heard of Philadelphia-area priests committing countless acts of sexual depravity against children entrusted to their care through the Archdiocese’s parishes and schools. The abuses ranged from glancing touches of genitals under the guise of innocent wrestling to sadomasochistic rituals and relentless anal, oral, and vaginal rapes. We found that no matter what physical form the abuse took, or how often it was repeated, the damage to these children’s psyches was devastating. Not only were the victims betrayed by a loved and revered father figure, but they also faced lifelong guilt and shame,

isolation from family and peers, and torments that typically included alcoholism, addictions, marital difficulties, and sometimes thoughts of suicide. In many cases, we discovered, the victims believed God had abandoned them.

For any who might want to believe that the abuse problem in the Philadelphia area was limited in scope, this Report will disabuse them of that impression. The Jurors heard from some victims who were sexually abused once or twice, and from many more who were abused week after week for years. Many of the priests whose cases we examined had more than 10 victims; some abused multiple victims simultaneously. Indeed, the evidence arising from the Philadelphia Archdiocese reveals criminality against minors on a widespread scale – sparing no geographic sector, no income level, no ethnic group. We heard testimony about priests molesting and raping children in rectory bedrooms, in church sacristies, in parked cars, in swimming pools, at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, at the priests' vacation houses in the Poconos and the Jersey Shore, in the children's schools and even in their own homes.

From all the documents and testimony put before us, we have received a tragic education – about the nature of child abuse, for example: how predators manipulate their prey, why the abuse so often goes unreported, how its impact on victims and their families remains lifelong. Even so, we find it hard to comprehend or absorb the full extent of the malevolence and suffering visited on this community, under cover of the clerical collar, by powerful, respected, and rapacious priests.

A. The evidence reveals that child sexual abuse follows regular patterns.

When we gathered, many of the Jurors did not understand the dynamics of clergy members' sexual abuse of minors. We could not understand how children who were so awfully abused could fail to tell anyone or, worse, would return to their abuser again and again. We learned from one of the leading American experts in the field, Kenneth Lanning, formerly of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, that the answer lies in the twisted relationship that acquaintance molesters initiate with their victims.

Those who prey on children first are careful in selecting their victims. They seek out vulnerable children who are needy for attention, often because of difficulties at home, because vulnerable children are easiest to mold to the abuser's desires. They then achieve power over their victims in a process that the experts call "grooming." Child molesters have enormous patience, identifying and pursuing victims sometimes for months before initiating the abuse. One might take a child to the beach, the cinema, or the local ice cream parlor, showering his prey with toys and treats. He will give his victim what the child believes is benign attention and "love." Abusers also often befriend the families of their victims, visiting their homes, becoming dinner guests, exploiting parishioners' reverence for the priesthood. The parents are pleased and flattered by a priest's attentions to their children.

What surprised the Jurors most in Lanning's lengthy testimony was that so many of these men come across as "nice guys," that they can be so outwardly likeable. Mothers and fathers like them. The children who are their targets often love them. These are not "Stranger Danger" predators who look shady or menacing; they are the pillars of the

Catholic community, respected and admired by all. Meanwhile, many of the targeted children do not understand sex in the first instance, so that when the priest reaches the point where he begins to act out sexually, the victims are utterly defenseless. As the abuse continues, their initial confusion turns to guilt and shame over what they believe they have allowed to happen. Many victims continue to think that priests can do no wrong or feel responsible for making a “good” priest go bad.

For the vulnerable child who craves love and security, and the devout child raised never to question the clergy’s authority, it becomes nearly impossible to break free from the abusive priest, even after the sexual abuse begins. Experts refer to this phenomenon as the “trauma bond.” Even though the abusive relationship is terribly damaging to the victim, he finds it difficult to remove himself from it because of the priest’s power over him and the psychological and emotional bond that has resulted.

1. Sexually abused children rarely report their abuse.

Related to the question of why victims seem unable to break free of their abusers is the question of why it takes some victims decades to report priest sexual abuse. We learned there are many reasons for delayed reporting. Most of the victims are devout and/or come from devout families. Therefore, many of them regard priests as God’s representatives on Earth. The well-educated priests, for their part, know very well the esteem in which trusting children and their parents hold them, and they manipulate that trust to ensure the victims’ silence. Some of the priests whose cases we examined told their victims that God had sanctioned the sexual relationship and would punish them if they revealed it. Others told children that they loved them, and that the sexual abuse

should be their little secret. Still others told their prey that they, the victims, were responsible for the abuse, and that no one would believe them if they told.

Psychological denial is not an unusual response to trauma, confusion, shame, and despair. And there are other, powerful disincentives to report a priest's abuse. Some victims fear damaging the Church's reputation. Others fear their parents' disbelief or anger – not toward the priest, but toward them. Some worry that such a horrific revelation could destroy their parents' sustaining faith in the Church. Many adolescent boys fear that revealing sexual contact with a man would call into question whether they are heterosexual.

2. The lifelong impact extends from isolation to “soul murder.”

The priests' manipulation of their victims, we found, can be as cunning as it is cruel. Often the offenders isolate their victims from others, dominating their time, criticizing their parents and friends, and discouraging activities outside of the church and the priests' presence. The victims come to believe that the abusive relationship is the only one they have. This strategy of isolating victims not only deprives them of someone in whom they might confide; it also serves the priest's purpose – to continue the abusive relationship. Subsequently, the isolation often becomes one of the cruelest consequences of abuse, destroying families and lasting decades.

We saw victims who had been told by their abuser that their parents had sanctioned the priest's actions. In two cases, the victims discovered only recently, as they prepared to testify before the Grand Jury, that what the priest had told them was not true. For 20 years they had been estranged from their parents, sometimes hating them, because

they believed that their parents had knowingly allowed their abuse. If a priest and God could betray them, how could they know that their parents had not as well? Parents, for their part, cannot understand their abused children, who for no apparent reason have turned their backs on school, church, friends, and family. Who suddenly are not fun-loving and happy, but sullen and withdrawn. Who are abusing alcohol and drugs and acting out in other ways. The parents blame their children.

Meanwhile, if other children suspect a boy is being abused, they often ridicule the victim, suggesting he is homosexual. And not just children do this. We heard testimony about a nun, the teacher of one victim, who – after the boy reported his abuse to police – began calling him by a girl’s name in class, eliciting giggles from his fellow students.

Most devastating of all, we saw firsthand what Father Thomas Doyle calls “soul murder.” As Father Doyle, a conscientious Dominican priest who has assisted clergy-abuse victims around the world, points out, these children suffer from the abuse not just physically and psychologically, but spiritually. The faith they need to cope with the tragedies of life is for them forever defiled. In order for a priest to satisfy his sexual impulses, these children lose their innocence, their virginity, their security, and their faith. It is hard to think of a crime more heinous.

3. Priests who abuse minors usually have many victims.

Another thing we learned about sexual abuse of minors is that the offenders typically have numerous victims. We heard from experts that the compulsion that drives some priests to molest or rape children is not curable, that treatment and supervision need to be intense and lifelong, and that the recidivism rate is extremely high. In the files of

Philadelphia Archdiocese priests that we obtained by subpoena, we saw what must have been crystal-clear as well to Cardinals Krol and Bevilacqua and their aides: that many, many priests each have had many, many victims, often spanning decades.

The experts told us that, given the nature of the crime, victims who report their abuse represent merely the tip of the iceberg, and that abusive priests likely have preyed on many more victims who have not come forward. We heard reports, most of which the Archdiocese had also received, about 16 victims of Fr. Nicholas Cudemo, 14 victims of Fr. Raymond Leneweaver, 17 victims of Fr. James Brzyski, and 18 victims of Fr. Albert Kostelnick. We believe there were many more.

B. The evidence provides many examples that help illustrate the patterns of abuse.

There are many more Philadelphia-area priests who have molested and sodomized parishioners' children than are named here. We cannot in this Report describe the cases of every priest against whom allegations have been raised. But we have tried to include histories that reflect the depraved patterns, if not the full magnitude, of sexual abuse perpetrated by Philadelphia Archdiocese priests. Consider, for example, the cases of Frs. Brzyski, Cudemo, Chambers, Gana, Kostelnick, Leneweaver, Martins, and Sicoli.

Father James Brzyski

It was Fr. Brzyski who told his victims that their parents knew and approved of his sexual abuse of their sons. The 6'5", 220-pound priest told this to a devout 12-year-old boy, "Sean," (the names of victims have been changed in this Report) whom he began anally raping in 1984. Sean, now a grown man, told the Jurors:

I've harbored this feeling towards my mom for going on twenty years and to come to find out the other night that it's not – you know, it was – it wasn't true. She had no idea. She had absolutely no idea.

So you know, I've been dealing with this. I've been hating her for twenty years for no reason whatsoever, and that's not right. That's my mom.

Father Bryzski had started the abuse when Sean was 10 or 11 years old – fondling the boy's genitals and rubbing his own against the child in the corner of the sacristy where the altar boys dressed. Sean estimated that Fr. Brzyski molested him “a couple of hundred times.” The abuse progressed from fondling to oral sex to anal rape.

Sean testified that he was scared, but he was devout. He believed that to say anything bad about a priest was a mortal sin, and that he would go to Hell if he told. So he said nothing, and continued to suffer the abuse even as its severity increased. His parents expressed pleasure that he was spending time with the priest. The abuse continued for seven or eight years.

Another of Fr. Brzyski's victims, “Billy,” told the Grand Jury that his deepest wish was to return to who he had been before the priest first thrust his hands down the 11-year-old's pants. He wanted God back, and his parents, and the joy of celebrating Easter and Christmas. He wanted to believe in Heaven and morality. He described how Fr. Brzyski's abuse had “turned this good kid into this monster.” He began to think of himself as two different people. He told the Jurors:

I had no God to turn to, no family, and it just went from having one person in me to having two people inside me.

This nice Billy . . . that used to live, and then this evil, this darkness Billy . . . that had to have no morals and no conscience in order to get by day by day and, you know, not to care about anything or have no feelings and to bury

them feelings so that you could live every day and not be laying on the couch with a depression problem so bad that, you know, four days later you'd be in the same spot.

The Archdiocese files had the names of 11 boys who had been reported as victims of Fr. Brzyski. Three of his victims who testified before the Grand Jury provided names of still others they knew of. Sean told Jurors that he saw as many as a hundred photographs of boys, ages 13 to 16, many of them nude, which Fr. Brzyski kept in a box in his bedroom. One of the pictures was of Sean.

Father Nicholas Cudemo

A top aide to Cardinal Bevilacqua described Father Nicholas Cudemo to the Grand Jury as “one of sickest people I ever knew.” This priest raped an 11-year-old girl. He molested a 5th grader in the confessional. He invoked God to seduce and shame his victims. He maintained sexually abusive relationships simultaneously with several girls from the Catholic school where he was a teacher. His own family accused him of molesting his younger cousins.

Complaints of Fr. Cudemo's sexual abuse of adolescent girls began in 1966, with a letter to Cardinal Krol describing a three-year “affair” between the priest, then in his first assignment, and a junior at Lansdale Catholic High School. More allegations followed in 1968 and 1977, the latter alerting the Archdiocese to another long-term sexual relationship with a schoolgirl, and her possible pregnancy.

Father Cudemo began abusing another girl, “Ruth,” in the late 1960s when she was 9 or 10 years old. When she was 11, he began to rape her. He would then hear her confession. He convinced the child that she could not survive without him, and that only through her confession was she worthy of God's love. When Ruth became pregnant at

age 11 or 12, he took her for an abortion. He abused her until she was 17. She has suffered severely ever since.

Father Cudemo taught at three high schools – Bishop Neumann, Archbishop Kennedy, and Cardinal Dougherty – being transferred each time because of what were recorded in Archdiocese files as “particular friendships” with girls. He was then recycled through five parishes, and twice promoted by Cardinal Bevilacqua to serve as a parish pastor. The Grand Jury heard of at least 16 victims.

Father Gerard Chambers

Father Gerard Chambers was accused of molesting numerous altar boys, and of anally and orally raping at least one, during 40 years as a priest in the Archdiocese. Beginning in 1994, four of his victims came forward to the Archdiocese to talk about their abuse. (The victims were from his 14th and 15th assignments – Saint Gregory, in West Philadelphia; and Seven Dolors, in Wyndmoor.) One victim, “Benjamin,” told the Archdiocese that Fr. Chambers plied him with alcohol and cigarettes and then abused him, “hugging, kissing, masturbating” him and engaging in “mutual fondling of the genitals.” This happened in the church sacristy, at Fr. Chambers’ sister’s house, and in the priest’s car.

Another victim, “Owen,” has tried to commit suicide and has been institutionalized at a state mental hospital. Father Chambers anally and orally raped him when he was 12 years old. Owen was, and continues to be, especially devout. He suffers delusions because he cannot reconcile his faith in the Church with what happened to him. Two of his brothers, “George” and “Francis,” were also victims of Fr. Chambers and are still haunted by their abuse more than 40 years later. They described to the Grand Jury

how the abuse ruined their family – each boy withdrawing and suffering in silence, even though they knew, they said, on some level, that Fr. Chambers was abusing them all. They could not tell their parents, who taught them to be in “awe” of priests. Rather than confide in anyone, George said they just “stuffed it down.” But he began drinking at age 13, and still suffers from serious depression.

The victims named several other boys from Saint Gregory whom the priest had abused. One of the brothers testified that he believed Chambers “sexually abused every altar boy and quite frequently those who weren’t altar boys.”

Father Stanley Gana

Father Stanley Gana also sexually abused countless boys in a succession of parishes. One victim, “John,” who testified before the Grand Jury, had gone to Fr. Gana in 1977 because the then-14-year-old had been sexually abused by a family friend. Father Gana used his position as a counselor and the ruse of therapy to persuade the boy to have physical contact with him. This “therapy” slowly progressed to full-fledged sexual abuse, involving genital touching, masturbation, and oral and anal sodomy. It continued for more than five years. Father Gana abused John in the rectory, at a house at the New Jersey Shore, on trips, and at the priest’s weekend house in the Poconos. Often there were several boys involved in a weekend or on a trip, and Fr. Gana would have them take turns coming into his bed. Sometimes he would have sex with John and another boy, “Timmy,” at the same time.

Father Gana abused Timmy for nearly six years, beginning in 1980, when the boy was 13. The priest ingratiated himself with Timmy’s parents. He was a frequent dinner

guest and he often brought gifts to the family. He hired Timmy to work in the rectory, took him on trips with John and other boys to Niagara Falls and Disney World, and for weekends to the Poconos. Timmy's parents pressured their son to spend time with Fr. Gana and constantly told Timmy that he should be grateful for all the priest did for him. Timmy found it impossible to avoid or report his abuse. He knew that his parents' view of priests could not be reconciled with his reality – the obese priest pushing the boy's scrawny, undeveloped body across a rectory bed so that his face was pressed against the carpet, ignoring the boy's cries of pain, and forcibly penetrating him anally. Timmy was sure his parents would not believe him.

In 1992, training to become a priest himself and in his final year of seminary, Timmy told Cardinal Bevilacqua's Secretary for Clergy, William Lynn, and another aide about his years of abuse by Fr. Gana. But, after hearing from the seminary dean that he thought Timmy "might sue the diocese for pedophilia," Cardinal Bevilacqua ordered an investigation – of the seminarian. The probe failed to prove any wrongdoing on Timmy's part, but the Cardinal refused to allow the victim to complete his studies and forced him to seek ordination outside the diocese. Father Gana remained an active priest in the Archdiocese until 2002.

Father Albert Kostelnick

The Secret Archives file (where the Archdiocese, in accordance with Canon law, recorded complaints of sexual abuse by priests) for Father Kostelnick contained numerous reports that he sexually fondled young girls. The reported incidents spanned 32 years, beginning in 1968, when he fondled the genitals and breasts of three sisters, ages 6 to 13 years old, as he showed slides to their parents in the family's darkened living room.

The three sisters also reported, in 2002, that Fr. Kostelnick had fondled their other sister as she lay in traction in a hospital following an automobile accident in 1971. They said the injured girl had to ring for the nurse to stop her molestation.

In 1987, Fr. Kostelnick was reported to the police for fondling an 8-year-old girl in an offensive manner. Cardinal Bevilacqua learned of additional complaints in 1988 and 1992, yet he allowed the priest to continue as pastor of Saint Mark parish in Bristol. The priest admitted in 2004 to the Archdiocese Review Board that his “longstanding habit” of “fondling the breasts of young girls” continued after these victims’ complaints were ignored in 1992. In 1997, Cardinal Bevilacqua honored the serial molester at a luncheon at the Cardinal’s house and set him loose as a senior priest in a new parish, Assumption B.V.M. in Feasterville. By the time Fr. Kostelnick was finally removed from ministry in 2004 (after Cardinal Bevilacqua’s tenure had ended), the Archdiocese had heard reports about at least 18 victims.

Father Raymond Leneweaver

At Saint Monica parish in South Philadelphia, Fr. Leneweaver named a group of altar boys whom he abused the “Philadelphia Rovers” and had T-shirts made up for them. He took the 11- and 12-year-olds on outings and, when he was alone with them, he molested them. He anally raped at least one boy. He repeatedly pulled another out of class at the parish grade school, took him to the school auditorium, forced the boy to bend over a table, and rubbed against him until the priest ejaculated. Another time in his rectory bedroom, Fr. Leneweaver pulled the boy’s pants down, smeared lubricant on his buttocks, and thrust his penis against the boy’s backside. Each time the priest’s crimes

were reported to the Archdiocese, he admitted his offenses. By 1975, he had confessed to homosexual activity with at least seven named children with whom he was “seriously involved.” He told Archdiocese officials of others he was involved with “in an incidental fashion.”

Cardinal Krol transferred this chronic abuser four times after learning of his admitted abuses. Predictably, Fr. Leneweaver continued to abuse boys in his new parishes. When he finally requested a leave from ministry in 1980, Cardinal Krol wrote a notation on a memo to his Chancellor:

His problem is not occupational or geographical & will follow him wherever he goes. He should be convinced that his orientation is an acquired preference for a particular method of satisfying a normal human appetite. – An appetite which is totally incompatible with vow of chastity + commitment to celibacy.

While this note shows that the Cardinal understood the compulsive nature of pedophilia and knew the likelihood that Fr. Leneweaver would abuse boys wherever he was assigned, the parents of his victims could not imagine such abhorrent behavior from a priest. They could not have conceived of the truth – that Fr. Leneweaver had been transferred to Saint Monica after admitting to the abuse of another boy at a previous assignment. The father of one victim beat his son until he was unconscious when the boy tried to report Fr. Leneweaver’s actions. The devout father, trusting priests and the Church more than his son, repeated as he beat the boy, “priests don’t do that.”

Father Nilo Martins

Father Martins was a Brazilian pediatrician and religious-order priest who came to the Archdiocese in 1978. In May 1984, he was assigned as an assistant pastor at Incarnation of Our Lord in North Philadelphia. On a Saturday afternoon in early February 1985, he invited a 12-year-old altar boy, “Daniel,” up to his rectory bedroom to watch television, ordered the boy to undress, and anally raped him.

Daniel, now a Philadelphia police officer, testified that as he cried out in pain, the priest kept insisting: “Tell me that you like it.” Daniel told the Grand Jury that he saw blood and was terrified. When the priest was done, he gave Daniel a puzzle as a present and told the boy to get dressed and leave.

Daniel, who had an unhappy home life and an abusive stepfather, went down to the church and cried. A young priest he considered a friend, Fr. Peter Welsh, saw him and asked what happened. After Daniel finished telling him, Fr. Martins entered and approached the two. Father Welsh then left the boy, took Fr. Martins’ confession, and never returned to talk to the boy.

A few days later, Daniel confided in his lay math teacher at the parish grade school. The teacher was horrified and immediately informed the pastor, Fr. John Shelley. The teacher also encouraged Daniel to tell his parents. Frightened that he might be beaten if he told his mother and stepfather, Daniel asked Fr. Welsh to go with him to tell them. Father Welsh said he was busy. The pastor, who should have reported the boy’s rape to police, or at least to his parents, also refused to accompany the boy to his house. Daniel finally got up the nerve to tell his mother. At her urging, he called the police.

The next day, when Daniel went to the church – as he did everyday to be with his friends – Fr. Shelley told him that he was not welcome anymore. The 12-year-old victim of a brutal anal rape by a priest was no longer allowed to be an altar boy. As word circulated, children at school called him a “faggot” and laughed as they said, “Ah, you got fucked in the ass.” Even a teacher, Sister Maria Loyola, he said, started referring to him in class as “Daniella,” prompting the class to laugh. When he asked her to stop calling him that, she gave him a demerit.

Daniel said he just wanted to disappear. Unable to change schools, he dropped out emotionally – withdrawing socially and failing academically. Father Martins pleaded guilty to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse and corruption of the morals of a minor. Deported back to Brazil, he did not serve his prison sentence.

Father David Sicoli

Father Sicoli paid for tuition, computers, and trips to Africa and Disney World for parish boys he took a particular liking to. He invited several to live in his rectories with him, and he gave them high-paying jobs and leadership positions in the Church’s youth group, the CYO. Some of them in interviews insisted that nothing sexual took place with the priest. But others, now grown, told the Grand Jury that Fr. Sicoli sexually abused them and treated them as if they were his girlfriends. From the start of his priesthood, and continuing through 2001, priests who lived with Fr. Sicoli warned the Archdiocese about his unhealthy relationships with boys.

Four victims from Immaculate Conception in Levittown, where Fr. Sicoli was assigned from 1978 to 1983, testified that he had sexually abused them when they were

12 to 16 years old. All of them said that Fr. Sicoli had plied them with alcohol and then abused them. Three told of being taken to a bar, the Red Garter, in North Wildwood, New Jersey. After Fr. Sicoli got the boys drunk, he asked them to drive him home – even though they were only 14 years old. On separate occasions, with all three, the priest feigned sickness in the car and asked them to rub his stomach. He then requested that they go “lower” and rub his crotch. The abuse these victims reported included mutual masturbation and oral sex. They said that Fr. Sicoli acted jealous and immature and threatened to fire them from their rectory jobs if they did not do what he wanted. Despite reports in Fr. Sicoli’s Secret Archives file of inappropriate relationships with these four victims and five other boys, Cardinal Bevilacqua appointed the priest to four pastorates between 1990 and 1999. At each one he seized on a favorite boy, or a succession of favorites, on whom he showered attention, money, and trips. Three of these boys lived with Fr. Sicoli in the rectories with the knowledge of Msgr. Lynn.

In October 2004, the Archdiocese finally removed Fr. Sicoli from ministry following an investigation by the Archdiocesan Review Board, which was created in 2002 to help assess allegations of abuse. The Review Board found “multiple substantiated allegations involving a total of 11 minors over an extensive period of time beginning in 1977 and proceeding to 2002.”