

Father Michael J. McCarthy

Cardinal Bevilacqua named Fr. Michael J. McCarthy pastor of Epiphany of Our Lord Church in Norristown in September 1992 – nine months after learning that the priest was accused of molesting several students from Cardinal O’Hara High School when he was a teacher there in the 1970s. The Cardinal had been informed that Fr. McCarthy had taken boys to his New Jersey beach house, plied them with liquor, slept nude in the same bed with them, and masturbated the boys and himself.

Cardinal Bevilacqua responded by having his assistant, Msgr. James E. Molloy, assure the priest, ordained in 1965 and then parochial administrator at Saint Kevin parish in Springfield, that the Cardinal did not “doubt . . . Father McCarthy’s ability to be pastor.” The only concern expressed by the Cardinal before promoting Fr. McCarthy to a pastorate was that his parish should “be distant from St. Kevin Parish so that the profile can be as low as possible and not attract attention from the complainant.” In the priest’s Secret Archives file at the time of his assignment to Epiphany was another accusation, made in 1986, by the mother of a recent O’Hara student.

In May 1993, Cardinal Bevilacqua removed Fr. McCarthy from his pastorate at Epiphany, but not because of his abuse of children. The Cardinal said he removed the priest for keeping homosexual pornography in his closet – but he had launched an investigation of Fr. McCarthy only after a large financial contributor complained to the Archdiocese. The contributor, a travel agent, had protested that Fr. McCarthy was acting as an agent himself and had taken away business she usually received from Epiphany’s travel club.

The Saint Luke Institute, in Suitland, Maryland, diagnosed Fr. McCarthy as a homosexual ephebophile – someone sexually attracted to adolescents. Secretary for Clergy William Lynn questioned the diagnosis, but Saint Luke refused to alter its finding. Church records suggest that the Archdiocese, which had used Saint Luke extensively to evaluate and treat priests, thereafter curtailed its relationship with the Institute.

The Archdiocese ignores a 1986 complaint of sexual abuse.

In September 1986, “Bruce’s” mother reported to Fr. Philip J. Cribben, the principal at Cardinal O’Hara High School, that her son’s biology teacher, Fr. Michael McCarthy, had touched Bruce in an improper way. Father Cribben originally ignored the complaint even though he had told Bruce’s mother that he had heard rumors but had felt powerless to act without an actual complainant. She wrote Fr. Cribben, volunteering that she or her son would be willing to talk to anyone and asking that the principal relay her allegation to Archdiocese managers. She asked also that her son be transferred out of Fr. McCarthy’s class immediately.

As reported third- or fourth-hand to Chancellor Samuel E. Shoemaker on December 5, 1986, by Msgr. David Walls in the Archdiocese education office, Fr. McCarthy touched Bruce's neck while the boy was seated in class, then "moved with his hands down the boy's back, finally touching his buttocks." Monsignor Walls reported further that "when confronted with this, Fr. McCarthy denied it but then proceeded to contact a lawyer." In fact, Fr. McCarthy had admitted to the principal "pinching" some students as he examined their work.

The action decided on, to remove Bruce from Fr. McCarthy's Track One Biology class, was one the principal initially refused to make. Monsignor Walls reported to Msgr. Shoemaker, though: "It was felt necessary to change two classes rather than just Fr. McCarthy's class so that it could be said that the change was for academic reasons." Thus, Bruce was, in effect, punished for having been a victim of Fr. McCarthy's sexual abuse.

As for Fr. McCarthy, not only was the complaint ignored, in 1989 he was made the administrator (which is like an acting pastor) at Saint Kevin Church in Springfield, Delaware County. Cardinal Bevilacqua made the appointment despite this complaint, which remained in McCarthy's Secret Archives file.

The Archdiocese ignores a 1991 complaint of sexual abuse.

On November 27, 1991, "David," a married father of two daughters, called the Archdiocese to report that when he was a student at Cardinal O'Hara High School in Springfield, a priest had befriended and then sexually abused him in the years 1974-1976. On December 23, 1991, he met with Monsignor James E. Molloy, the Assistant Vicar for Administration, and his aide Msgr. William J. Lynn, and named Fr. McCarthy as his abuser.

David related that Fr. McCarthy had been his Advanced Placement Biology teacher his sophomore year at O'Hara (1974-1975). David said he had done poorly on a test and Fr. McCarthy bet him a dinner that he would get a 90 or better on the next test. David said he got a 63 on the next test, but when he subsequently received a 94 on another test, Fr. McCarthy took him to dinner. The two began to talk frequently at school. The teacher took the boy to his shore house in Margate, New Jersey. There they went to the beach and out to

dinner. The priest's house had a well-stocked bar and David said Fr. McCarthy provided boys with liquor. At night, the priest slept in the same bed with the student even though there were two bedrooms in the house and one had two beds. The priest always slept naked.

David reported to the Archdiocese managers that, as time went on, Fr. McCarthy told the student not to take his clothes into the bathroom when he showered so that the boy had to walk naked in front of the priest. The boy initially slept in underwear, but after the priest wrestled them off of him one night, he also took to sleeping in the nude. The priest began to put his arm around the boy in bed, then to touch his nipples. Eventually, he fondled the boy's genitals.

David described one night when the priest took him to Atlantic City for dinner. According to David, Fr. McCarthy was "pumping drinks" into the boy and insisted he drink some of the priest's Chivas Regal. Back at the beach house, in one bed, nude, Fr. McCarthy began to touch and stroke his student's penis. After the boy reached orgasm, he said, the priest tried to kiss him with his tongue.

David told the Archdiocese managers that he then asked whether the priest did this same thing with other boys he brought to the beach. Father McCarthy answered that he did. He then masturbated himself.

Monsignor Molloy asked David whether he found convincing the priest's claim that he masturbated the other boys he brought to the beach. David said he did. He provided the Archdiocese managers with the names of several boys he knew accompanied Fr. McCarthy to his beach house. Monsignor Lynn, in his notes, listed: "the ["Jones"] boys from Notre Dame, ["Harold"] from St. Charles Parish in Drexel Hill and another boy that [D] said MM was friendly with before he became friendly with [D] whom MM was upset about." There is no indication the Archdiocese ever attempted to locate these people either to question them or to determine whether they needed assistance.

The Archdiocese managers typed the notes from their interview and had the victim sign them on January 23, 1992. In the margin of the memo is a handwritten notation instructing Msgr. Molloy: "Never admit to victim that there have been other cases."

As the administrator at Saint Kevin Church, Fr. McCarthy, faced with this second allegation, provided a signed declaration, dated February 17, 1992. It denied the accusation and stated: “To the best of my recollection the incident alleged by [David] never took place.” A handwritten note in the margin described the priest’s denial as “very guarded” and “suspicious.”

Monsignor Molloy forwarded David’s allegation, along with Fr. McCarthy’s suspect denial, to Cardinal Bevilacqua on March 16, 1992. The Cardinal allowed Fr. McCarthy to continue as administrator at Saint Kevin.

Concerned with scandal, Cardinal Bevilacqua ignores complaints against Father McCarthy and appoints him pastor of Epiphany of Our Lord Church in Norristown.

When Msgr. Molloy forwarded David’s signed allegation to Cardinal Bevilacqua on March 16, 1992, he also informed the Cardinal that the victim was aware Fr. McCarthy was administrator, and a possible successor to the retiring pastor, at Saint Kevin parish in Springfield. Monsignor Molloy wrote to Cardinal Bevilacqua that “the complainant has indicated that he cannot see how the Archdiocese could appoint Fr. McCarthy as pastor in light of his behavior as alleged.” Cardinal Bevilacqua apparently saw this problem as one of publicity, not fitness, because within months he did appoint Fr. McCarthy as pastor, but for a different parish – Epiphany of Our Lord Church in Norristown.

Monsignor Lynn recorded that, at a meeting on June 18, 1992, Msgr. Molloy “related to Fr. McCarthy his understanding of the Cardinal’s directions as related verbally to him by Monsignor Cullen.” Monsignor Molloy told Fr. McCarthy that Cardinal Bevilacqua “has decided it is in Father McCarthy’s best interest not to be appointed pastor of St. Kevin Parish.” The reason given was not because of the danger Fr. McCarthy posed, but, rather, scandal: “[Fr. McCarthy] *could be the subject of great publicity and tarnished reputation should the complainant go forward with his story*” (emphasis supplied).

That fear of scandal was the sole motivation of the Archdiocese’s decision became even clearer when Msgr. Molloy assured Fr. McCarthy “that the Archbishop was not implying doubt about Fr. McCarthy’s ability to be pastor,” and that, *despite the allegations against him, he could be “appointed pastor at another parish after an interval of time has*

passed” (emphasis supplied). That parish, Msgr. Molloy relayed from Cardinal Bevilacqua, “*would be distant from St. Kevin Parish so that the profile can be as low as possible and not attract the attention of the complainant*” (emphasis supplied). (Appendix D-18)

Father McCarthy, in response, demonstrated that he understood well that Cardinal Bevilacqua did not consider serious allegations of child abuse a disqualification for being a pastor. He immediately set out his demands for a future parish. Monsignor Molloy recorded that the priest did “not want to be stationed in Philadelphia,” that he preferred “to stay in Delaware County,” and that he “would like to be stationed in a parish where he has help” and which could “support itself financially.”

Moreover, Fr. McCarthy told Msgr. Molloy that he “did not agree with the evaluation he received from Dr. Miraglia.” This was a reference to a psychological report read only by Cardinal Bevilacqua. Monsignor Lynn’s June 18 memo explained that this report had been delivered to the Cardinal sealed and had been resealed with tape by Cardinal Bevilacqua before Msgr. Cullen returned it to the file. It was not turned over to the Grand Jury.

A month and a half later, on September 3, 1992, Cardinal Bevilacqua appointed Fr. McCarthy pastor at Epiphany of Our Lord Church in Norristown – a church with a school. No limitations were placed on his ministry. Rather, as pastor, he had unfettered discretion and authority.

The Archdiocese ignores complaints made shortly after Father McCarthy’s appointment as pastor at Epiphany of Our Lord.

Within days of his appointment as pastor at Epiphany of Our Lord, the Office for Clergy started receiving complaints about the pastor. The complaints appear to be consistent with the previous ones, and, like the previous ones, were ignored.

On September 14, 1992, Fr. Michael O’Malley, an associate pastor at Epiphany, brought a fellow priest’s reports about Fr. McCarthy to Msgr. Lynn’s attention. Father O’Malley told Msgr. Lynn that Fr. Michael Saban had complained about Fr. McCarthy’s behavior, his open discussions about frequenting gay bars, and his constant sexual

innuendos and jokes. Father O'Malley also related that Fr. Saban had, months earlier, registered complaints about Fr. McCarthy with Msgr. Lynn's assistant, Fr. Karl Zeuner. Monsignor Lynn's notes from his meeting with Fr. O'Malley do not recount the substance of the allegations made to Fr. Zeuner. The Secretary for Clergy wrote, though, that Fr. O'Malley recommended that Fr. Saban "go and sign his interview with Father Zeuner." Monsignor Lynn recorded that "Father Saban told Father O'Malley that a lawyer had recommended that he not do that, because if any problems ever went to court Father Saban would be called in to testify." Concerning the allegations, the Secretary for Clergy opined: "Everything was innuendo." He wrote, "there was much that Father Saban told Father O'Malley for which there was no proof." There is no indication that Msgr. Lynn ever endeavored to find "proof."

Monsignor Lynn's September 14, 1992, memo of his conversation with Fr. O'Malley did not state an intention to take any action, but recorded that "Father O'Malley stated that he does not intend to speak with Fr. Saban any more about the issues involving his new pastor, Reverend Michael McCarthy."

A few months later, however, Fr. O'Malley asked for a transfer from his assignment. On March 23, 1993, he met with Msgr. Lynn to explain his reasons. Father O'Malley told Msgr. Lynn that Fr. McCarthy did not do his share of the work and that he was negative in his dealings with parishioners and the rectory staff. He again mentioned the sexual innuendos. He told Msgr. Lynn that Fr. McCarthy received underwear catalogues in the mail and had, hanging in his bedroom, a framed poster entitled "Survival of the Fittest", which portrayed a naked man with rope around his genitals. Father O'Malley reported that his mother was very upset when Fr. McCarthy showed her his room and she saw the poster. The associate pastor told Msgr. Lynn that Fr. McCarthy kept a bag of pornographic videos in his closet. Monsignor Lynn filed his handwritten notes of this meeting with Fr. O'Malley, but, again, showed no intent to act upon the information.

That changed when Cardinal Bevilacqua received a letter, dated April 13, 1993, from Lily Giuffrida.

The Archdiocese responds to the complaint of a large contributor that Father McCarthy was stealing business from her.

Lily Giuffrida's complaint about Fr. McCarthy began:

Dear Cardinal Bevilacqua,

I do not know if you remember me. We had dinner at your home. My husband, Dominic, . . . did give you his personal donation for \$25,000, for Catholic Life Renewal.

Giuffrida's complaint was that Fr. McCarthy was operating as a travel agent, which was also her business. Giuffrida explained that Epiphany of Our Lord's travel club had done business through her travel agency, Lillimar Travel, Inc., until Fr. McCarthy became pastor. She said that she had learned that Fr. McCarthy was himself a travel agent and was "running his trips through Kitty Ward Travel." She told the Cardinal she was not concerned that he had chosen another agency, but was upset that "we donate to Churches who now become our competitors."

At the next issues meeting on April 20, 1993, Cardinal Bevilacqua, according to the minutes, "requested that a high priority be placed on procuring all the facts related to" Lily Giuffrida's letter. Monsignor Lynn, at the Cardinal's direction, began investigating Giuffrida's complaint on April 22, 1993.

At Cardinal Bevilacqua's instruction, Msgr. Lynn met first with Msgr. Robert Maginnis, Vicar for Montgomery County, and uncharacteristically shared Fr. McCarthy's history with him. Monsignor Lynn invited concerns and recorded that Msgr. Maginnis had received five or six complaints about Fr. McCarthy's harsh treatment of altar boys and children in the confessional. Monsignor Lynn met five days later, April 27, 1993, with Fr. Christopher Jungers, a resident in Epiphany's rectory. Father Jungers told Msgr. Lynn that Fr. McCarthy was self-centered and uninterested in ministry. The resident said the pastor cursed at high school kids working in the rectory. He said the pastor was immodest, and described how Fr. McCarthy invited priests into his bedroom for drinks, dressed in a tank top and silk running shorts. He confirmed what Fr. O'Malley had told Msgr. Lynn before Giuffrida sent her letter – about the underwear catalogues and homosexual videos in the closet. Monsignor Lynn's handwritten notes reveal that he, again uncharacteristically, probed – asking Fr. Jungers about the complaints Msgr. Maginnis had passed on about

altar boys and children in the confessional. Monsignor Lynn's notes record Fr. Jungers answering that they were "all afraid."

Monsignor Lynn also interviewed Lily Giuffrida. She repeated her complaint that Fr. McCarthy was a "bona-fide travel agent."

Finally, on May 11, 1993, while Fr. McCarthy was on vacation, Msgr. Lynn "inspected" his closet. There he found 13 videos whose titles, he wrote, "seemed to indicate that the content of each was homosexual," a magazine entitled "A Guide to the Gay Northeast," and travel brochures focusing on gay vacation spots.

On May 12, 1993, Msgr. Lynn sent Cardinal Bevilacqua a memo outlining all the information he had gathered since the April 20 issues meeting. He also wrote up Fr. O'Malley's complaints, which Msgr. Lynn had listened to in March and then filed away.

Cardinal Bevilacqua asks Father McCarthy to resign because he is believed to be a homosexual, not because of his sexual abuse of young boys.

On May 24, 1993, Msgr. Lynn and Msgr. Maginnis communicated to Fr. McCarthy the Cardinal's request that he resign his pastorate. Cardinal Bevilacqua met with the priest that evening at the Cardinal's residence. In a memo recording that meeting, Cardinal Bevilacqua wrote that he asked Fr. McCarthy to resign "as a result of the discovery of improper material in the possession of Fr. McCarthy." The Cardinal concluded: "It had to be very obvious from my interview and the interview with Msgr. Lynn that implications of the material found were that Fr. McCarthy was homosexual." Thus, it was complaints about Fr. McCarthy's business practice that sparked a serious investigation into him, and his mere *status* as a presumed homosexual, rather than his actions as a sexual abuser of young boys, that the Cardinal used to justify requesting his resignation.

The Cardinal wrote that he disbelieved Fr. McCarthy's story that he had taken the videos from a young Irish man three years earlier and was merely holding them. Although Fr. McCarthy did deny that the videos were his, Cardinal Bevilacqua claimed to find the priest's denials and protests of innocence insufficiently strong.

On May 26, 1993, a month and a half after Lily Giuffrida wrote her letter to Cardinal Bevilacqua, Fr. McCarthy resigned his pastorate and Cardinal Bevilacqua granted

him a “period of health leave.” No new allegations of abusing minors had become known to the Archdiocese since Cardinal Bevilacqua had named him pastor in September 1992.

Father McCarthy undergoes treatment and is diagnosed with ephebophilia.

Father McCarthy was sent initially to Saint John Vianney Hospital, then, on August 16, 1993, was transferred to Saint Luke Institute in Suitland, MD. He proved to be an extremely defensive patient and made slow progress. Father McCarthy remained at Saint Luke and its halfway house for ten months. Upon his release in June 1994, he was diagnosed, according to a September 9, 1994, memo from Cardinal Bevilacqua to the file, with “homosexual ephebophilia” (attracted to post-pubescent boys). Monsignor Lynn informed the Cardinal that Fr. McCarthy’s therapists felt “that there is still more that has not yet been revealed and do not think we should risk having Fr. McCarthy in any assignment” for at least three years.

On July 25, 1994, Cardinal Bevilacqua placed Fr. McCarthy on administrative leave and limited his faculties to celebrating private Mass for himself. In September, Cardinal Bevilacqua personally informed Fr. McCarthy that it was his policy not to assign a priest who had ever been diagnosed a pedophile or an ephebophile. When Fr. McCarthy protested that he thought his diagnosis was unfair, Cardinal Bevilacqua invited him to “put all his allegations against Saint Luke’s in writing and send his statement to me.” Cardinal Bevilacqua encouraged him to “take his time in making a thorough and complete listing of all his allegations.”

Despite more allegations, Monsignor Lynn questions Father McCarthy’s diagnosis.

Upon his release from Saint Luke’s halfway house on June 24, 1994, Fr. McCarthy took up residence at his house on the New Jersey Shore, in Margate. He got a job as a cashier at a casino in Atlantic City and he attended continuing care workshops conducted by Saint Luke staff. He reported that he attended AA and sex addicts anonymous meetings regularly.

On July 8, 1996, in response to an inquiry from Saint Luke's continuing care staff, Msgr. Lynn reported that there had been new accusations brought against Fr. McCarthy "for alleged actions approximately six years ago." Monsignor Lynn wrote of complainants – plural, but provided no other details. The allegations are not documented anywhere in the files turned over to the Grand Jury. Two weeks earlier in a letter to Msgr. Lynn, Fr. McCarthy had thanked the Secretary for Clergy "for [his] intervention in the St. Kevin Irish situation."

On June 16, 1998, after the pastor at Saint Kevin died, Fr. McCarthy, who was still forbidden to celebrate Mass publicly, wrote to Cardinal Bevilacqua asking to be appointed to that pastorate. Monsignor Lynn did not seriously consider this request, but he did talk to Fr. McCarthy about his diagnosis as an ephebophile and how it might be dealt with if Fr. McCarthy wished to return to ministry. Monsignor Lynn asked Fr. McCarthy to have his current therapist send a letter addressing Saint Luke's diagnosis. Monsignor Lynn told Fr. McCarthy he would speak to Fr. Stephen J. Rossetti, the director at Saint Luke, to see what he could do.

Monsignor Lynn recorded in a memo that he had already met with Fr. Rossetti and discussed "some of his concerns about St. Luke Institute." After meeting with Fr. McCarthy, he wrote Saint Luke's director and explained to him that in the Philadelphia Archdiocese, a diagnosis of pedophilia or ephebophilia meant a priest could not receive an assignment. He told Fr. Rossetti that Fr. McCarthy disputed his diagnosis, and that he, Msgr. Lynn, questioned the competence of Fr. McCarthy's therapist there. In other words, Msgr. Lynn was calling into question the priest's diagnosis as an ephebophile despite knowing: that the priest had admitted he was attracted to teenage boys; that he had admitted sleeping nude in the same bed with them; and that he was accused of sexually molesting several minors.

After checking Fr. McCarthy's file, Fr. Rossetti explained to Msgr. Lynn that the diagnosis was made by a team – based on, among other things, Fr. McCarthy's admission that he was sexually attracted to adolescents. According to Msgr. Lynn's notes of his telephone call with Fr. Rossetti, the St. Luke director told him that the staff believed the diagnosis was valid and accurate and "should remain as it is."

The Archdiocese, which had used Saint Luke extensively for evaluating and treating sexually abusive priests, sent few, if any, clergy to that facility after 1994, when Fr. McCarthy complained to Cardinal Bevilacqua about his diagnosis as an ephebophile. (None of the 28 priests profiled in this report were sent to Saint Luke after Fr. McCarthy's treatment there.) The Grand Jury chooses not to speculate on the Archdiocese's reasons for discontinuing its relationship with Saint Luke. However, it is noteworthy that, in the course of dealing with Fr. McCarthy's treatment there, Msgr. Lynn became familiar, if he was not already, with current techniques for testing attraction and orientation in sexual offenders. Therapists told him that a particular test used at Saint Luke – a penile plethysmography – was used by most experts in evaluating sexual orientation and that it could provide valuable information in diagnosing sexual disorders. The Grand Jurors find that the Archdiocese's decision to have priests evaluated at its own hospital, Saint John Vianney – which did not employ up-to-date methods, including plethysmography, and relied instead on a perpetrator's word – had the effect of diminishing the validity of the evaluations and the likelihood that a priest would be diagnosed as a pedophile or an ephebophile.

Father McCarthy remains on unsupervised leave for more than 10 years.

From June 1993 until he retired in October 2003, Cardinal Bevilacqua left Father McCarthy on administrative leave, totally unsupervised. The Archdiocese has finally taken steps to supervise, or laicize, Fr. McCarthy and other priests like him – known sexual abusers who are no longer in active ministry. In September, 2004, Msgr. Lynn's successor as Secretary for Clergy, Msgr. Timothy Senior, offered Fr. McCarthy two options: he could agree to “a supervised life of prayer in penance in a residence assigned by the Cardinal” or he could seek voluntary laicization. Monsignor Senior informed the priest that if he failed to choose either, his case would be sent to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, with a request that the priest be involuntarily laicized. Father McCarthy had not made his decision as of the last information provided to the Grand Jury.

Father McCarthy appeared before the Grand Jury and was given an opportunity to answer questions concerning the allegations against him. He chose not to do so.

David, who initially came to the Archdiocese asking for nothing but an apology to his mother, became embittered and angry with Church officials for leaving Fr. McCarthy at Saint Kevin and then promoting him to pastor of Epiphany of Our Lord. David's mother never received an apology.