

Father Francis P. Rogers

The Grand Jury will never be able to determine how many boys Father Francis P. Rogers raped and sexually abused in his more than 50 years as a priest. Nor, probably, will we or anyone else be able to calculate the number of boys the Archdiocese could have saved from sexual abuse had it investigated potential victims rather than protecting itself from scandal and shielding this sexually abusive priest. We have learned of at least three victims who we believe would not have been abused had the Archdiocese taken decisive action when it learned of Fr. Rogers' "familiarity" with boys. We find that the Archdiocese received a litany of verifiable reports beginning shortly after Fr. Rogers' 1946 ordination and continuing for decades about his serious misconduct with, and abuse of, boys.

One of his victims described waking up intoxicated in the priest's bed, opening his eyes to see Fr. Rogers, three other priests, and a seminarian surrounding him. Two of the priests ejaculated on him while Fr. Rogers masturbated himself. Then Fr. Rogers sucked on the victim's penis, pinched his nipples, kissed him, and rubbed his stubbly beard all over him. The former altar boy, whom Fr. Rogers began abusing when he was about 12 years old, remains haunted by memories of the abuse more than 35 years later.

Father Rogers' file demonstrates that the Archdiocese responded to reports of his crimes with a shameful half-century of transfers, excuses, and finger-wagging threats that did nothing to deter the priest from indulging his self-acknowledged "weakness" and that exposed every boy in his path to the very real and horrible possibility of sexual abuse.

Father Rogers sexually abuses "Russell."

In approximately 1962 or 1963, during his first year as an assistant pastor at Saint Joachim's parish in Philadelphia, Fr. Francis Rogers began molesting Russell, having selected him as an altar boy. The priest was 43 or 44; Russell was around 12. Father Rogers sexually abused Russell every week until sometime after Russell turned 16. In a statement he provided to the Grand Jury, discussions with the Archdiocese, a letter he wrote to a detective, and a follow-up interview with the detective, Russell described an escalating sequence of abuse that began when he was an altar boy working on setting up a manger. On that first occasion, Fr. Rogers put his hand inside Russell's underwear and slid his finger into the cleft between Russell's buttocks. Russell was baffled; he knew that what Fr. Rogers had done was a bad thing, but Fr. Rogers was smiling and, moreover, he was a priest and as Russell had been taught, priests were "chosen by God and could do no wrong."

Quickly thereafter, Fr. Rogers insinuated himself into Russell's home and began to take Russell to dinner and the movies. The boy grew to hate these outings because they ended with kissing that, in Russell's words, "led to something else," namely Fr. Rogers putting Russell's penis in his mouth. Russell's psychological turmoil was intense. He blamed himself for Fr. Rogers' sexual attacks and hated himself as a result. Like other abuse victims, Russell decided "it must have been something I did to make him do these things to me." Father Rogers had chosen his victim well; young Russell wanted to make his father proud of him and saw his family's pride in the attention Fr. Rogers paid him. These factors likely created a very strong pressure on the boy not to report the priest's abuse.

Father Rogers used alcohol to limit Russell's ability to resist his attacks. He regularly took Russell to a New Jersey beach house and got him drunk. Having done so, he took Russell to bed and did whatever he wanted to him. Father Rogers also inflicted pain on the boy. He made a practice of rubbing his beard stubble all over the boy, focusing on his nipples and the head of his penis. Father Rogers simply ignored Russell when he said that it hurt and asked the priest to stop. Russell hid his feelings of fear and disgust in the alcohol Fr. Rogers forced on him. To this day, he recalls Fr. Rogers' sweaty, hairy chest all over him and the priest's gin-soaked breath.

Father Rogers took the boy to New York for Broadway shows and fancy restaurants almost as if they were dating; at the restaurants the priest would place an alcoholic drink before the child. Afterwards, back in the car, he made the boy fondle his penis and then drove him to New Jersey for further abuse.

Russell wrote to the detective that one summer day Fr. Rogers anally raped him despite his best efforts to protect himself. Father Rogers had taken Russell and a group of altar boys to his New Jersey Shore house. The boy figured that if he left the beach ahead of the others and showered and dressed he would be safe from Fr. Rogers' predations: the priest would not touch him in front of the others. Russell went to the garage where the showers and a makeshift chapel were in close proximity. When he emerged from the shower, Fr. Rogers jumped him, ripped his towel off and threw him to the cement floor on which the boy struck his head. They landed in the chapel. Father Rogers forced the boy's

legs up and stuck his erect penis into his anus, causing extreme pain. When he had sated himself, Fr. Rogers left the boy on the ground. Russell dressed and rode Fr. Rogers' bicycle 15 miles to his sister's summerhouse in Ocean City but was too afraid to tell his mother and sister what had happened to him. Unaware what happened to Russell, the boy's sister and mother put the bike into the car and drove him back to his abuser. Father Rogers was frightened at first, thinking the boy had revealed the assault. When he discovered that his sexual abuse of the boy was still secret, Fr. Rogers instructed the boy never to reveal it. Father Rogers told the boy that if others learned of the abuse they would think ill of Russell's mother for allowing him to be with the priest.

It would be unseemly to compare or rank the types of psychological and sexual abuse Fr. Rogers heaped upon Russell. Yet, one event, involving the presence of multiple priests, is particularly notable. As Russell described it in his letter to the detective, one morning at the shore house he awoke intoxicated in bed. Opening his eyes, he saw Fr. Rogers, three priests, and a seminarian looking at him. Two of the priests ejaculated on him while watching Fr. Rogers masturbate himself with one hand and caress Russell's penis with the other. Then Fr. Rogers sucked Russell's penis, pinched his nipples, kissed him on the lips, and rubbed his beard all over him. More than 35 years later Russell still trembles at the memory of this abuse.

Father Rogers was simultaneously abusing a friend of Russell's. One winter day when Russell was visiting Fr. Rogers, he saw the boy sucking Fr. Rogers' penis. Detected, the priest ordered Russell to go shovel the driveway.

The Archdiocese fails to respond effectively to three separate reports prior to Father Rogers' rape of Russell.

Had the Archdiocese paid attention to prior reports of Fr. Rogers' abuse of boys, the priest might never have had the chance to rape Russell and assault other boys. We find that by May 5, 1961, the date on which the Archdiocese Chancellor, John J. Noone, wrote a memorandum to the file about then-current reports of Fr. Rogers' misconduct with boys, Fr. Rogers already had a more than 10-year history of reports of serious misbehavior with boys. On that date, more than a year before he ever met Russell, Fr. Rogers was an assistant pastor at Saint Francis of Assisi in Norristown. According to the Church memo,

Doctor Hoffman, a psychiatrist, conveyed to Fr. Noone reports of Fr. Rogers' "familiarity" with 8th- and 9th-grade boys. The Chancellor met with Fr. (later Monsignor) Charles Devlin, the second assistant at Saint Francis, Msgr. McNally and Fr. Rogers. He recorded that Fr. Rogers "has taken boys out of school for trips to the seashore, occasionally overnight ones; frequently takes boys in his automobile and to drive-ins. He provides opportunities for them to smoke in his car or the parish garage; has [a]llowed them to drink; taken obscene pictures of them, and showed them indecent magazines." Father Noone also noted that some of the boys' mothers had complained; that one boy had told his mother he "never want[ed] to go with Father Rogers again"; that Fr. Rogers was known to wrestle with boys in public and lift them above his head; and that his speech was sometimes "vulgar and startling."

These were not the first complaints concerning Fr. Rogers' improper contact with boys. Father Noone's memo discloses that Fr. Rogers was "[f]amiliar" with boys in at least two other assignments dating back to his first assignment at Saint Patrick in Pottsville in 1946-1949. The precise meaning of this seemingly innocuous word, "familiar," is lost to time: the Secret Archives file contains no documents detailing the pre-1961 allegations. The Grand Jury notes, however, that Fr. Noone used the word "familiarity" to describe the above, serious charges against Fr. Rogers, which provides some clue as to the behavior he had previously been accused of committing. (Appendix D-21)

Father Noone's memo does not explicitly state that Fr. Rogers admitted the truth of the allegations against him. However, we find for two reasons that he must have either explicitly or implicitly done so. First, Fr. Noone concluded, after meeting with Fr. Rogers and others, that Fr. Rogers had committed the misconduct; given Church practice, it is highly unlikely that he would have drawn that conclusion had Fr. Rogers not admitted to the misconduct. Moreover, the memo recites that Fr. Rogers' response to the allegations was to "reveal the history of his weakness." We find that that phrase is a euphemism for Fr. Rogers' preference for sexual activity with boys: Fr. Rogers' explanation of the history of his "weakness" was that he said he was "victimized" by a boarder in his own home as a boy, that he had a weak character and an inferiority complex, and that he was "victimized" in the seminary by an older student.

It apparently never occurred to anyone in the Archdiocese to have a psychiatrist examine Fr. Rogers even though there was clearly one available – the report of Fr. Rogers’ misconduct had come from a psychiatrist who was already treating the pastor of Fr. Rogers’ parish. We find that even in the early 1960’s it would not have required great psychological insight to order such an examination, given Fr. Rogers’ claim that he had been repeatedly abused himself and the fact that this was the *third* parish reporting that he had committed serious improprieties with boys. Instead, in handwritten notes on the memo, Cardinal Krol himself established the ineffective procedure that would be followed repeatedly with Fr. Rogers: warn him that he must change his behavior or face allegedly harsh consequences. Two sets of the Cardinal’s notes appear on the memo. The first prescribes an immediate retreat, a “[s]evere warning that any further complaint will call for summary deactivation!” and “transfer to another post.” The second set states that the Cardinal met with Fr. Rogers on May 8, 1961, and notes: “1) 2 week retreat; 2) change; and 3) Caveat! Must avoid slightest suspicion – any further complaint will provoke effective action to preclude scandal – even civil.”

The Grand Jury finds that Cardinal Krol’s notes do not direct that any attempt be made to determine which boys Fr. Rogers abused or speak to them about what Fr. Rogers did to them. Instead, the Archdiocesan response to the serious allegations against the priest was, at best, lukewarm and apparently motivated by the fear of “scandal.” We also note that even the two week retreat that Cardinal Krol prescribed to alter Fr. Rogers’ more than decade-long practice of abusing boys was not possible: the Trappist Monastery where Fr. Rogers was sent permitted only ten day, not two week, retreats.

The Archdiocese fails to respond adequately to accumulating evidence of Father Rogers’ deficiencies of character and continuing misconduct with boys.

The Grand Jury finds that Fr. Rogers’ self-described weak character manifested itself in other than sexual ways that should have raised questions about his fitness to retain any position of trust or authority. A 1965 letter from a parishioner reported that Fr. Rogers had declined a request that he visit a woman before a serious operation despite having had more than six hours to do so; the woman died shortly after her operation. A 1969 letter

from another parishioner reported that Fr. Rogers had announced at the wake of her husband's 89-year-old great-uncle that no priest would be at the grave the following morning. The family decided to conduct the prayers themselves and, before ten p.m., rang the bell of the rectory, seeking to borrow the necessary prayer book from Fr. Rogers. The parishioner reported that Fr. Rogers took offense and ordered them from the rectory saying, "Get out! I don't have to stand here and be insulted... Get out!" A 1970 memo to the file from Chancellor Terrence F. Monihan noted a visit from a parishioner whose son Fr. Rogers had struck with a stick when the boy missed an altar boy assignment; the parishioner had to be persuaded not to report the incident to the police. According to the memo, Fr. Rogers admitted that he struck the child and promised that he "would never strike a child again, and certainly would never use a stick to strike a child again."

The Grand Jury further notes that the Archdiocese either ignored or, at best, failed to act effectively in response to additional reports of Fr. Rogers' misbehavior with boys. Mothers of Saint Barnabas parish students sent an anonymous letter in May 1973 to the Chancery reporting that Fr. Rogers used foul language with women and children; constantly wrestled with boys in public and in private; and took older boys for rides in his car during school hours without informing their teachers. The letter-writers stated that they were withholding their names to safeguard their children but declared that little effort would be required to verify the truth of their report. These allegations are disturbingly reminiscent of the 1961 report of Fr. Rogers' misbehavior already discussed, a report whose allegations of his misbehavior with boys that Fr. Rogers essentially conceded was true.

We find that the Archdiocese's response to the May 1973 reports of serious misconduct, like its response to the 1961 memo, was not calculated to protect the safety of the boys to whom Fr. Rogers had access. Chancellor Statkus explicitly told Fr. Rogers, as he recorded in his June 8, 1973, memo to the file, that he would take no action: "I noted to him that we would not take any action or investigate the letter since it is anonymous; however, I noted that if a signed letter or report comes to our attention, he will then be confronted." Monsignor Statkus' brief memo concludes with the following sentence, that lacks even the strength of Cardinal Krol's 1961 consideration of the possibility of

summary deactivation: “I indicated to him that in view of the past reports, any future unfavorable reports would be treated very seriously.” We find that in light of the fact that it had been at least 24 years since the first reports of Fr. Rogers’ misbehavior with boys that this comment from Msgr. Statkus was extremely unlikely to have any deterrent effect on the priest’s misbehavior.

A signed complaint about Fr. Rogers’ conduct arrived at the Archdiocese in January 1974; the writer, “Elizabeth,” stated that Fr. Rogers was a bad example for Saint Barnabas boys and was vulgar with the women. Chancellor Statkus met with Fr. Rogers concerning the letter. Interestingly, although the letter did not allege improper contact with boys, the memo notes that “[a]s to his rapport with the boys, [Fr. Rogers] alleged no actions and no trips with anyone, but stated that he used vulgar expressions or words.” Chancellor Statkus also repeated the familiar admonitions to Fr. Rogers:

I noted to Father Rogers that in view of previous reports of his using vulgar and offensive language even when he was stationed at Incarnation parish [1968-1971], and in view of other more serious matter in earlier times, any further indications or reports of vulgarity or erratic behavior will be treated with sternness.

I noted that such action would be taken which would not only indicate a change of assignment but would place him for psychiatric consultation and care and possible inpatient rehabilitation.

One indication of the lack of gravity with which Fr. Rogers apparently regarded this now-familiar warning (in fairness, the portion of the censure concerning psychiatric consultation and possible inpatient rehabilitation was somewhat new) was that he asked Msgr. Statkus whether he would be assigned a pastorate. The Chancellor told Fr. Rogers that he would not be considered for such a promotion unless there was positive evidence “that these matters have been eliminated.” An answer was not long in coming, albeit not the one the Archdiocese was apparently hoping to receive. Fewer than two weeks later, the Archdiocese began to receive anonymous letters asserting an improper association between Fr. Rogers and a married woman who lived in Saint Barnabas parish. Chancellor Statkus spoke with Fr. Rogers, who denied the allegations. Statkus also spoke with Fr. Gough, Fr. Rogers’ pastor, who “feels that there is no scandal; and, therefore, no need to transfer him now.” When Fr. Gough was sent a letter in March 1974 repeating the accusation against

Fr. Rogers, Fr. Rogers reported that he destroyed it, allegedly to prevent Fr. Gough from being “distracted” during a hospital stay. Chancellor Statkus advised Fr. Rogers that if the letter writing continued, a transfer might have to be considered.

The Archdiocese continues to tolerate Father Rogers’ misconduct with boys.

The Grand Jury finds that on June 25, 1975 (as well as at several previous and subsequent times), the Archdiocese was deeply suspicious of Fr. Rogers’ conduct with boys (and women) but unwilling to take decisive action or to preclude Fr. Rogers’ potential advancement within the Church, even though Fr. Rogers did not deny the truth of the reports of his misconduct. In a June 26, 1975, memo to the file, Vice Chancellor Francis Clemins recounted a recent meeting with Fr. Rogers. Monsignor Clemins summarized the Archdiocese’s concern about promoting Fr. Rogers: “I told him that the suspicion of patterns involving homosexuality has been in the picture for some time, and I again reminded him that he knows of what I am speaking. He nodded in a positive way.”

In the two sentences that follow the acknowledgment of Fr. Rogers’ long history of suspected sexual contact with young boys, Msgr. Clemins summarizes the Archdiocese’s position on Fr. Rogers’ future advancement and Fr. Rogers’ response: “I told [Fr. Rogers] ... that in spite of these problems he has not been taken out of consideration for a pastorate, but this apprehension still exists. He offered no defense or argument in favor of new evidence that he has put aside any reason for such suspicion.” In other words, despite Fr. Rogers’ lengthy history of suspected sexual contact with boys and his complete failure to demonstrate that he had ceased such behavior, the Archdiocese still regarded him as a candidate for a pastorate.

Cardinal Krol had, nearly 15 years earlier, reacted to the allegations of Fr. Rogers “familiarity” with boys in the 1961 memo by prescribing a retreat, urging “change” and threatening transfer. Now, in March 1976, he met with Fr. Rogers at the priest’s request to discuss a possible pastorate. According to the Cardinal’s handwritten, signed notes, he reviewed Fr. Rogers’ record on the “various types of complaints that have been lodged against him on serious and less serious types of charges.” The Cardinal noted that those

charges gave rise to questions not only about Fr. Rogers' "weakness" but also about his "ability to engage the sympathetic cooperation of the people he serves." As to the complaints, the Cardinal noted that they "can be argued or explained but you cannot deny that some people were sufficiently disturbed by him to complain against him." The Cardinal noted that he told Fr. Rogers that he could make "no promises or predictions, however I will ask for a review of his record and for an evaluation of the risks, if any, entailed in entrusting him with a [last word illegible]." The Grand Jury finds that in 1976, given the accumulation of evidence over the thirty years of Fr. Rogers' priesthood, the Cardinal knew or should have known that Fr. Rogers posed a substantial risk in any situation that brought him into contact with boys.

Fewer than two months later, a Saint Barnabas parishioner named "Mary" wrote an April 19, 1976, letter to "Your Eminence" and an April 20, 1976, letter to "Monsignor" concerning the behavior of the Saint Barnabas priests, especially Fr. Rogers. In the April 20, 1976, letter, Mary stated that Fr. Rogers' "chasing of boys is well known." The Archdiocese had previously declined to investigate earlier, anonymous complaints from the mothers of Saint Barnabas parish stating that Fr. Rogers was wrestling with boys in public and private and taking them for unauthorized rides in his car during school hours, despite the similarity of these reports to the 1961 allegations against him that Fr. Rogers had either implicitly or explicitly admitted were true. Mary's report was not anonymous. Yet, there is no indication in the file that the Archdiocese ever contacted the non-anonymous Mary. Each of her two signed letters bears the handwritten notation, "No address listed F.J.S[tatkus]." There is no other evidence in the file of any attempt to find or speak with Mary. Within one month of the receipt of these letters, Fr. Rogers was transferred from Saint Barnabas.

The Archdiocese attempts to limit the damage resulting from Father Rogers' admission that he sexually abused Russell.

In March 1998, Russell informed the Archdiocese that Fr. Rogers had sexually abused him for years in the early 1960s. Father Rogers' file contains undated 1998 notes recording some of those allegations, as well as notes headed with the name "Hank Keene,"

one of the Archdiocese's attorneys. Those notes indicate that even at the point that Russell came forward to identify Fr. Rogers as having sexually abused him – further proving what the Archdiocese had known for decades – the Archdiocese still sought to avoid having to act. Underneath Mr. Keene's name, the notes say “due to time since alleged incident,” “no recent complaints,” “Fr. R. age – (77?),” “H.K. advice – wait for letter before confront.”

On April 6, 1998, Russell met with Msgr. Lynn and Fr. Measure and provided the details of Fr. Rogers' abuse, as well as the name of “Richard,” a current parishioner who, as a boy, had been sexually abused by Fr. Rogers. Monsignor Lynn's account of the meeting to Cardinal Bevilacqua hopefully notes that Russell was “not antagonistic and did not make any demands.” The memo also delicately records that material in the Secret Archives indicates that “there was a problem” in the 1960's with this behavior.” Interviewed that day, Fr. Rogers initially declared Russell's accusations to be “maybe” true. Then, he admitted to sexually fondling Russell when Russell was a boy. Finally, he admitted that, according to Fr. Measure, “[Russell] was being truthful in his accusations.”

Father Measure reported that after consulting with legal counsel it was decided that it was sufficient, given Fr. Rogers' age and retired status, for Fr. Rogers to receive outpatient psychological evaluation. The Grand Jury finds that the initial findings and recommendations of Vianney therapist Andrea Delligatti, Ph.D., who performed a psychological evaluation of Fr. Rogers, do not demonstrate even a cursory knowledge of Fr. Rogers' psychological makeup. The Archdiocese therapist did not diagnose Fr. Rogers as having any sexual disorder. We also find it significant that the materials produced to the Grand Jury by the Archdiocese do not include a final Psychodiagnostic report concerning Fr. Rogers.

Despite Fr. Rogers' admission to sexually abusing Russell, the Archdiocese preferred not to provide Russell with additional information. For instance, in October 1998, when Russell asked Fr. Measure to tell him the name of the one priest Fr. Rogers had identified as a participant in masturbating on Russell, Fr. Measure told him that the man was dead and because he could not defend himself against the accusation, “I was not sure that it would be right to be giving out his name.” Father Measure's concern for the priest's reputation in light of the “accusation” was arguably misplaced. Seemingly it was more a

fact than an accusation since Fr. Rogers had admitted that the event had occurred and himself provided the priest's name.

In further contravention of their professed dedication to the needs of victims of sexual abuse, Archdiocese officials did not attempt to find additional victims of Fr. Rogers, even when provided with a name. On April 7, 1998, Russell told Fr. Measure that he had spoken the night before to another Rogers victim, Richard, who was willing to speak to the Archdiocese about his abuse if contacted. Father Measure told Russell that since Fr. Rogers was "cooperating," he did not see a need to contact Richard, although Russell was welcome to tell Richard to call if he needed assistance. We find that Archdiocese's behavior in Fr. Rogers' case was not an isolated example of its unwillingness to seek out additional victims of identified abusers. Rather, the Archdiocese adopted a passive approach: it would speak to those victims who came forward but not to speak to or seek additional victims even where provided with the names and/or addresses of those victims.

Church officials were more willing to be aggressive when it came to the possibility that Russell would file a civil suit. In a June 3, 1999, letter to Russell, an attorney for the Archdiocese declared that the Archdiocese had concluded that two other people had had sexual contact with Russell when he was a minor. The basis for the attorney's statement was apparently the fact that during his initial interview with Fr. Measure and Fr. Lynn, Russell revealed that a baby sitter and a relative had molested him by the time he met Fr. Rogers. Ultimately, the Archdiocese paid some of Russell's counseling and other medical bills but declined any other financial settlement.

More victims come forward.

If the Archdiocese hoped that failing actively to seek additional victims would prevent them from coming forward, it was to be disappointed. On February 28, 2002, Msgr. Lynn received a call from a man concerning the period from 1959 to 1961 when Fr. Rogers was assigned to Saint Francis of Assisi in Norristown – the assignment that was the subject of the 1961 memo. Because Lynn kept limited, semi-legible and cryptic notes, it is impossible to say what, if anything, Fr. Rogers did to the caller. However, in a subsequent

letter Msgr. Lynn expressed the hope that their conversation had been able “to ease your mind somewhat, and was an instrument of closure for you.”

On March 11, 2002, fewer than two months later, the Archdiocese received a call from a victim who said he was “abused when he was ten years old by Fr. Francis Rogers at Townsend’s Inlet and elsewhere, trips to Hair and Jesus Christ Superstar.” Although he did not want to give a full account of his abuse, the victim mentioned (presumably as places where the abuse occurred): Saint Joachim’s (where Fr. Rogers was assigned from 1962 to 1968), Incarnation (1968 to 1971), and “61st and Dickerson.” A third new case of child sexual abuse by Fr. Rogers was reported in June 2002. In that month, the Deacon of the Archdiocese of Charleston, South Carolina, called to report that “Sean” reported that Fr. Rogers had sexually abused him in approximately 1976-77 when Fr. Rogers was Assistant Pastor at Saint Ambrose. Msgr. Lynn’s handwritten notes on the phone message relate that the abuse involved fondling and sex. They also list the names of two males, one of whom is recorded as having committed suicide. There is no evidence that the Archdiocese attempted to investigate the abuse of either of those males or questioned Fr. Rogers about them.

Father Rogers’ abuse of his young victims was shameful, as was the Archdiocese’s unwillingness or refusal to stop it. Had the Archdiocese interceded, as it should have, instead of allowing Fr. Rogers to remain a priest for more than 50 years, it likely would have saved countless boys from the trauma inflicted on them by Fr. Rogers.

Father Rogers was never punished or held to account for his unchecked sexual predations or the devastation they caused. He was permitted to retire in 1995, his “good name” intact. The message clearly communicated by the Archdiocese’s actions – to victims and abusers alike – was that it would protect the reputation of its priests at all costs. This twisted sense of priorities was not lost on Fr. Rogers. In 2002, according to a Philadelphia Inquirer article, Fr. Rogers admitted to having sexual relations with Russell but minimized its significance and questioned the importance of the disclosure. Father Rogers said that the abuse “may have happened but it was not as prolonged as he says it was. . . . Naturally, he was young and I was older, so I should have known better. I don’t know why it has to come out now. . . . It will just ruin my reputation.”

On October 6, 2004, faced with the possibility of involuntary laicization, Fr. Rogers agreed to live “a supervised life of prayer and penance” at Villa Saint Joseph, a retirement home for priests. Although he was sworn in to testify before the first grand jury, it was determined that Fr. Rogers was too feeble to be questioned and no testimony was taken. He died in February 2005.