

## **Father Francis J. Gallagher**

*Father Francis J. Gallagher was arrested in Sea Isle City, New Jersey, on December 28, 1989, for soliciting sex with two young men – ages 18 and 20 years old. He later admitted to sexually abusing two adolescent brothers.*

*With information about the priest's abuse of minors in Archdiocese files, Archbishop Bevilacqua appointed Fr. Gallagher, in May 1991, as parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception, a parish with a school in Jenkintown. In 2000, Fr. Gallagher was transferred to another parish with a school – Mary, Mother of the Redeemer in North Wales. In choosing this parish for Fr. Gallagher, Secretary for Clergy William Lynn noted that "because of past difficulties, he needs to be in Montgomery or Bucks County."*

*Cardinal Bevilacqua never limited Fr. Gallagher's ministry or restricted the priest's access to minors. Not only were parishioners not warned about Fr. Gallagher's past, but deliberate efforts were made to place him among unsuspecting families.*

*As with other priests, the Archdiocese did not act in the absence of pressure from parents or fear of scandal. Church officials did not act even when the priest's abuse of minors was admitted and possibly ongoing. There is no indication in Archdiocese records that efforts were ever made to identify Fr. Gallagher's known victims, to ascertain if their abuse was continuing, or to notify their parents.*

*Father Gallagher, ordained in 1973, remained an active parish priest until March 2002 when publicity from the scandal in Boston prompted the Cardinal to remove several priests still ministering despite histories of abusing minors.*

### **Father Gallagher is arrested and sent for treatment.**

In 1989, Fr. Francis Gallagher was a teacher at Cardinal Dougherty High School in Philadelphia, where he had been transferred after teaching for 13 years at Cardinal O'Hara High School in Springfield. Two weeks after resigning his job at Cardinal Dougherty, Fr. Gallagher was arrested on December 28, 1989, in Sea Isle City, New Jersey, for offering money in exchange for sex to two young men, ages 18 and 20. On January 5, 1990, then-Secretary for Clergy John J. Jagodzinski learned that a news reporter was calling the Archdiocese to inquire about the arrest.

The Secretary for Clergy arranged for Fr. Gallagher to go to Saint John Vianney Hospital that same day. After an evaluation there, he was transferred on February 5 for treatment to Saint Luke Institute in Suitland, Maryland. He remained at Saint Luke for nine months.

On February 22, 1990, while Fr. Gallagher was at Saint Luke, his attorney succeeded in having the criminal charges against him dismissed. The attorney informed the New Jersey court that his client was already engaged in an extensive rehabilitation program. It was agreed that if Fr. Gallagher completed the program, he could file for expungement of his record.

Upon his release from Saint Luke on October 23, 1990, Fr. Gallagher resided at Immaculate Conception, a Philadelphia rectory used by the Archdiocese to house recovering priests. He reported that he attended AA meetings, meetings for sex addicts, and individual and group therapy sessions as mandated by Saint Luke's continuing care program. He assisted part-time at Saint Cecilia in North Philadelphia.

### **Father Gallagher returns to parish ministry without any restrictions.**

On May 24, 1991, Archbishop Bevilacqua welcomed Fr. Gallagher back to active ministry and appointed him as parochial vicar at Immaculate Conception Church in Jenkintown. Four days later, Archbishop Bevilacqua wrote, on a note attached to a report from Saint Luke, that he was "deeply concerned about [Fr. Gallagher's] move." The Archbishop was concerned, apparently, because he was aware that in addition to being arrested for solicitation, Fr. Gallagher had admitted to abusing two adolescent brothers (an admission he repeated years later to Msgr. Lynn). Despite Archbishop Bevilacqua's expressed concern, however, there is no indication that Archdiocese managers made any effort to determine if that abuse was ongoing, or to warn the boys' parents. Nor did the Archbishop restrict Fr. Gallagher's faculties even though his new parish had a grade school.

Father Gallagher remained at Immaculate Conception for nine years with free access to parish children. The only thought given to removing him was to place him in a bigger parish with *more* families. A note dated November 30, 1993, from Msgr. Lynn to his assistant Fr. James Beisel suggested: "I think we should interview [Fr. Gallagher and] see if he is ready for assignment elsewhere – Less families in Jenkintown."

On January 18, 1996, the Office for Clergy again took up the subject of moving Fr. Gallagher. Another assistant of Msgr. Lynn, Msgr. Michael T. McCulken, interviewed Fr. Gallagher and wrote that the priest "reminded me that he had been arrested one time

in Sea Isle City and that an assignment in Delaware County probably would not be prudent.” Father Gallagher was left in place.

Three years later, on June 2, 1999, Msgr. Lynn met with Fr. Gallagher to discuss the priest’s future. Archdiocese officials had determined that Immaculate Conception no longer needed a parochial vicar, and Msgr. Lynn was considering what would be a suitable assignment for the priest. Father Gallagher expressed an interest in becoming a pastor. Monsignor Lynn recorded in a memo of their meeting that as they were discussing Fr. Gallagher’s career, “I remembered in my own mind that Father Gallagher had some kind of difficulty with sexually acting out.” Monsignor Lynn wrote that Fr. Gallagher brought the subject up himself, stating that he “lived in fear every day” that something from his past would “come back to haunt him or the Archdiocese.” According to Msgr. Lynn’s notes, Fr. Gallagher “said it would be best for him to stay away from Cardinal O’Hara territory,” meaning the high school where the priest had taught from 1976 to 1989.

Father Gallagher told again of his sexual abuse of two young brothers. Monsignor Lynn did not record, if he even asked, the names of these boys or when or where the abuse occurred. Even though Msgr. Lynn had been Secretary for Clergy for six years, and his office had considered reassigning Fr. Gallagher several times during that period, Msgr. Lynn wrote in his memo for the file that he had not been aware of Fr. Gallagher’s abuse of the two minor brothers. Father Gallagher’s prior admission that he abused those boys had been in his Secret Archives file since February 23, 1990. Monsignor Lynn was claiming in effect that, for six years, while stories about priests’ abuses of minors were erupting around the country, he knew that Fr. Gallagher had “some kind of difficulty with sexually acting out,” but had failed to look at the priest’s Secret Archives file, even when considering assignments, to find out whether his “difficulty” involved children.

Even when Msgr. Lynn undeniably had the information that Fr. Gallagher had a history of abusing minors, the Secretary for Clergy did not act immediately to remove the priest from his parish assignment or to restrict his access to the children at Immaculate Conception or its grade school. It was not until March 6, 2000 – nine months later – that Msgr. Lynn met with Fr. Gallagher “as a follow up to our June 2, 1999, meeting.” Monsignor Lynn did inform the admitted child molester that he “would not be considered

a viable candidate for a pastorate,” but he entertained the priest’s request for a parochial vicar position “commensurate with his skills and education.” This is when Msgr. Lynn noted that “[b]ecause of past difficulties, he needs to be in Montgomery or Bucks County.”

On May 26, 2000, Cardinal Bevilacqua appointed Fr. Gallagher parochial vicar at Mary, Mother of the Redeemer, in North Wales, Montgomery County – another parish with a school. There is no indication on record that the Cardinal placed any limitations on Fr. Gallagher’s faculties or even notified the parish pastor or school principal about his past.

**Cardinal Bevilacqua asks Father Gallagher to resign only under pressure from the Boston abuse scandal.**

Finally, on February 13, 2002, in response to the scandal in Boston, Cardinal Bevilacqua removed Fr. Gallagher from ministry. Monsignor Lynn met with Fr. Gallagher on that day and followed up with a letter explaining that the Archdiocese had changed its “policy” of allowing limited and supervised ministry by priests who had abused minors. According to notes recorded for the file, Msgr. Lynn told the priest that the Archdiocese was prompted by events in Boston now to remove such priests from ministry altogether.

Father Gallagher must have been baffled by Msgr. Lynn’s description of the supposed “old” policy, since his ministry had been neither limited nor supervised following his admission that he sexually molested two boys. Nevertheless, Fr. Gallagher informed the Archdiocese that he would comply with the Cardinal’s request that he petition for laicization.

In discussing the priest’s future, Msgr. Lynn suggested that Fr. Gallagher’s skills and degree in education would be useful in finding another job. Assuming that Fr. Gallagher were to have followed this suggestion, because of the Archdiocese managers’ failure to report the priest’s criminal behavior, a background check by potential employers in the field of education would not have alerted them to the risk he posed to children.

According to the most recent documents presented to the Grand Jury, Fr. Gallagher has been teaching undergraduates and graduate students at two local “institutions of higher learning.” As of September 2004, he was still considering requesting voluntary laicization.

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