

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

MEMORANDUM

TO: File
FROM: Rev. Brian M. Flatley *Bmf*
DATE: March 21, 1996
RE: Rev. Robert M. Burns

On Thursday, March 21, 1996 a call was transferred to me from the Cardinal's residence. A young man said that his mother told him that she read in the bulletin at Saint Thomas Aquinas Church in Jamaica Plain that we were looking for victims of Father Robert Burns. The young man said that he was sexually abused, specifically fondled a number of times, by Father Burns about ten or eleven years ago. The young man said that he is twenty-two years old today, so he was eleven or twelve at the time. He said that he has been in counseling to deal with the situation and has put it behind him.

I asked if we could be of assistance to him. He was under the impression that we were looking for witnesses against Father Burns. I told him that Mr. Burns has pleaded guilty in New Hampshire, and that he was in jail. The young man commented that he knew in his heart that there were others.

He asked if we knew about Father Burns when we sent him to Jamaica Plain. I responded that we knew that he had been involved in sexual misconduct in his past but we were told that there was very little chance that he would act out again. We thought he was cured. The young man expressed disbelief at this. He asked if we told anyone at Saint Thomas Aquinas about Father Burns' past. I said no, that Father Thomas knew nothing. He asked how we could have done that. I told him that there is no good explanation.

He said that he supposed that we transferred Father Burns when we learned about his abuse. I explained that his transfer from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Charlestown was not due to sexual misconduct. We did not learn about Father Burns' continuing abuse until he was in Charlestown. At that point we removed him immediately.

The young man was obviously disturbed by this information. He said that this keeps getting worse. I asked if he would give me his name and repeated that we would like to help in any way we can. He declined to give his name. I told him that Father Thomas would like to reach out to him as well. At this point he seemed just to want to end the telephone call.

I called Father Thomas and told him about the conversation. We agreed that we would like to see this young man approach one of us to receive some additional help.

Copy: Sister Rita McCarthy, C.S.J.

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