

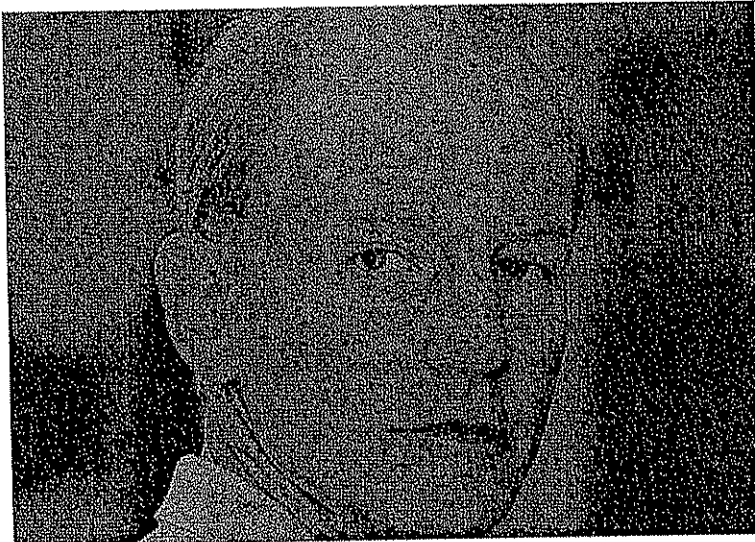
Bishop: I Was More Worried about Priest's Drinking Abuse | Backed Ordaining McCormack Despite Reports of Sex 'Improprieties'

By Susan Hogan
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<http://www.suntimes.com/lifestyles/religion/648822,CST-NWS-bishop14.article>

While rector of Mundelein Seminary in the 1990s, Bishop Gerald Kicanas says he knew about three reports of "sexual improprieties" against then-seminarian Daniel McCormack.

Still, Kicanas supported McCormack's ordination, he told the Sun-Times.



Daniel McCormack
Photo by Brian Jackson

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"It would have been grossly unfair not to have ordained him," said Kicanas, now bishop of Tucson, Ariz., who was interviewed Tuesday after his election to vice president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

McCormack went to prison in July for molesting five boys while assigned to a West Side parish.

U.S. bishops are trying mightily at their assembly in Baltimore this week to portray the scandals as largely a problem of the past. The McCormack case exposed the Archdiocese of Chicago's recent failures when allegations surfaced before the priest's 2006 arrest.

Mundelein officials learned in 1992 about sexual accusations against McCormack involving two adult males and a minor. The incidents began in 1988 when McCormack was at a seminary school known as Niles College, according to archdiocesan reports.

"There was a sense that his activity was part of the developmental process and that he had learned from the experience," Kicanas said. "I was more concerned about his drinking. We sent him to counseling for that."

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McCormack was ordained in 1994. The following year, Kicanas became a Chicago auxiliary bishop.

The archdiocese's vicar general, the Rev. John Canary, also worked at Mundelein at the time. He recently told the Sun-Times that McCormack should have never been ordained.

Kicanas disagrees, saying there was no "credible" allegation against McCormack.

"I don't think there was anything I could have done differently," Kicanas said.

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