

RUNAWAY PRIESTS HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

A symbolic station



MONA REEDER/Staff Photographer

The Rev. James Tully (in jacket) passes through St. Peter's Square. He was assigned to Rome two years ago, shortly after he was accused of sexual misconduct for the third time.

The Rev. James "Jim" Tully

ROME CASE STUDY #1

He arrived in Rome shortly after the Boston Archdiocese received a letter in 2002 accusing him of abuse. It was at least the third misconduct allegation made against Father Tully in a decade. One incident led to a criminal prosecution in Milwaukee in which he pleaded no contest to disorderly conduct in 1992 for giving three boys alcohol and grabbing one on the inner thigh.

CURRENTLY

He works for the Union of Superiors General, an association for leaders of the world's Catholic orders, and lives with his order, the Xaverian Missionary Fathers.

HISTORY

After coming under investigation in Milwaukee, Father Tully was sent to a Connecticut treatment center for "his sexual problem," according to a letter from his therapist. The letter also said the priest "never denied responsibility for his sexual behavior" and realized the "damage that this had inflicted." Father Tully served two years of probation, then was reassigned overseas and spent most of his time in Africa before going to Rome. Other allegations — of fondling in the 1970s and 1980s — came after the criminal case and led to at least one settlement with the Boston Archdiocese.

THE PRIEST SAYS

He declined to speak with a reporter who approached him in Rome.

THE XAVERIANS SAY

The Rev. Bob Maloney, a Xaverian official, said Father Tully was sent to the treatment center because of a drinking problem. He said he was unaware of the therapist's letter, which is in a public court file. The Xaverians had no part in the Boston settlement, he said. The order sent Father Tully to Rome because he was coping with the stress of working in war-torn parts of Africa, he said.



PROBATION

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the United States two years ago as his criminal record and new allegations began to emerge.

Here in the heart of Catholicism, church leaders are giving refuge to priests who face allegations of sexual abuse in other countries. *The Dallas Morning News* located the men — some of them admitted abusers — as part of a yearlong investigation into the global movements of accused priests.

Some are stationed in the comfort of their religious orders' world headquarters. One strolls by St. Peter's Square en route to his job. Another leads English-language tours at ancient church burial grounds. And until recently, one man was serving his house arrest across the street from the Vatican.

The priests would not discuss their cases at length. Their supervisors said they did not assign the men to Rome to help them elude law enforcement or victims. The goal, they said, was to give the priests a place to live and work away from children.

"It's not the worst place in the world; that's true," said the Rev. Michael Higgins, the Passionist order's American leader. Last year, he sent to Rome a priest who had been investigated, but not prosecuted, on abuse claims. "But it's not a reward."

A former top administrator at a Catholic college near the Vatican said placing accused and even fugitive priests in Rome was "very detrimental" — especially at a time when the church is trying to restore its battered image.

"I don't think they understand taking those people over there is a scandal," said the Rev. Lawrence Breslin, a retired priest who was the second-in-command at Pontifical North American College. "Rome is the center of the church. People see it as a holy place. It is not a place for harboring criminals."

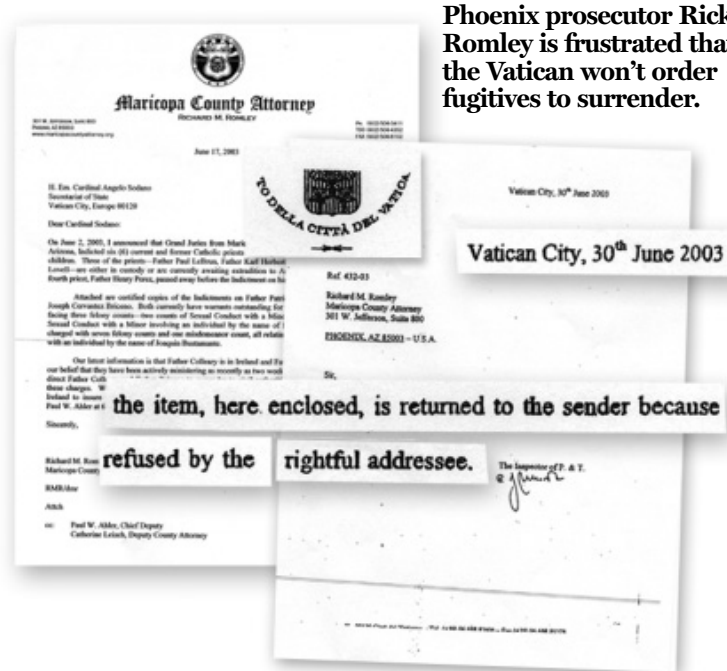
Several of the priests' superiors said they did not notify the Diocese of Rome about the men and were not obligated to do so because they were not staffing parishes. The bishop of the diocese is Pope John Paul II.

Of the seven accused priests *The News* located in Rome, Father Henn was the only one registered at the diocese's offices, according to the Rev. Marco Fibbi, a diocesan spokesman. Neither Father Fibbi nor Father Henn's bosses would say whether the diocese was told



DAVID KADLUBOWSKI/Special Contributor

Phoenix prosecutor Rick Romley is frustrated that the Vatican won't order fugitives to surrender.



return, and if not, we defrock you."

President Bush's chief representative to the Vatican — the only religious institution recognized as a sovereign nation — refused to comment on its handling of clergy abuse matters. Ambassador Jim Nicholson "does not comment on church business," his spokeswoman said.

Slow to act

Despite the pope's tough talk, the Vatican has moved slowly in dealing with a scandal that has cost the church hundreds of millions of dollars in payments to victims and led to the resignations of several bishops who sheltered priests.

Shortly after the pope met with the cardinals in spring 2002, leaders of the U.S. church gathered in Dallas and passed an aggressive "zero tolerance" policy for molesters. But the Vatican balked, saying several parts of the policy were not in line with church law, and ordered changes. Among them: imposing a deadline for complaints, which in effect allows many abusers to go unpunished.

Even after Rome and the U.S. bishops hashed out the policy's details, the Vatican continued to employ an acknowledged abuser as a foreign diplomat. The Vatican had promoted the Rev. Daniel Pater despite his 1995 financial settlement with an Ohio victim and two warnings from Monsignor Breslin. Then in late 2002, it moved him up again, this time to temporarily run the papal embassy in India. He stepped down last year, as *The News* was preparing a story about the case.

And the Vatican has kept former Boston Cardinal Bernard Law, the U.S. church leader most associated with protecting priests, on several decision-making panels and recently gave him a job leading a historic Roman basilica.

"There is this gulf between saying the right thing but not appropriately following through with the right actions," said Brother Barry Coldrey of Australia, a church historian who has written extensively about clergy abuse.

Four years ago, the Vatican made Brother Coldrey, a member of the Christian Brothers order, remove from the Internet his book, *Religious Life Without Integrity: The Sexual Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church*. A Vatican letter to Brother Coldrey said: "We ques-

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The Rev. Edgar Hidalgo

ROME CASE STUDY #2

Father Hidalgo worked in a Mexico City parish for about three years while wanted on Italian sex-abuse charges. He was arrested in 2002, extradited to Italy and convicted. An Italian court let him serve house arrest with his religious society, the Cruzados de Cristo Rey, in an office across from the Vatican.

CURRENTLY

Because of "various evasions," his house arrest was revoked a few months ago, and he is now in a Rome prison, authorities said.

HISTORY

Father Hidalgo left Mexico City in the mid-1990s and went to work near Naples, Italy. He returned to his native Mexico a few years later, after parents complained to officials in the Pozzuoli Diocese that he was abusing children. Italian authorities concluded that he had abused an 11-year-old girl and several other children, sometimes during orgies. Meanwhile, Mexico City Cardinal Norberto Rivera put the fugitive priest to work in a parish.

THE PRIEST SAYS

He could not be reached in prison for comment. Italian authorities said he has confessed to some abuse and agreed to undergo treatment.

THE CHURCH SAYS

Cardinal Rivera's press office said in a 2002 statement that until the priest's arrest, the cardinal did not know he was a fugitive. The cardinal declined to be interviewed. Pozzuoli Bishop Silvio Padoin did not respond to written questions.



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