

Report
To
Joseph Cardinal Bernardin
Archdiocese of Chicago

The Cardinal's Commission on Clerical
Sexual Misconduct with Minors

Honorable Julia Quinn Dempsey
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June 1992

June 11, 1992

Dear Cardinal Bernardin,

With this letter, we present to you "The Report of the Cardinal's Commission on Clerical Sexual Misconduct with Minors."

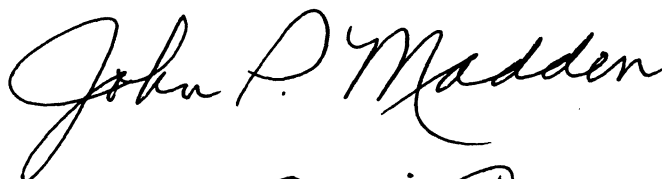
The tasks you set before us last October were formidable. We have spent hours and days listening, reading, and debating the complex issues related to each of the four mandates you gave us. We have labored at length over our recommendations and this Report because we believe that Church members and Church officials want and deserve an in depth review on how to resolve, as far as humanly possible, the issue of clerical sexual misconduct with minors.

Our deliberations brought us to consensus on the Report. We believe that it speaks for us and represents our best thoughts on the many issues encompassed by the complex matter placed before us.

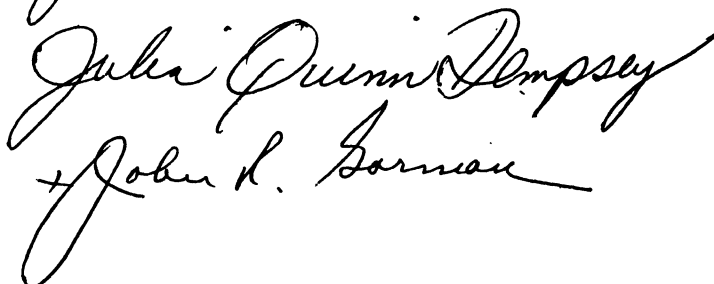
You commissioned us, and we present our Report to you. We understand that further work will be needed on your part, in accord with canonical requirements and archdiocesan policies on consultation, to implement our recommendations and to transform them into policy. From our working sessions with you, we take hope that policy will be set, promulgated, and put into practice before the end of the year. We stand ready to assist you and your advisors in the process of moving recommendations into decisions.

Our research and discussion took longer, and our Report is longer, than might have been anticipated. However, the subject is serious and the potential for good is great. We thank you for addressing the issue forthrightly and for inviting us to share our expertise. We gave our time and talents willingly, and we trust that the spirit and substance of our Report will enhance the life and ministry of the People of God in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

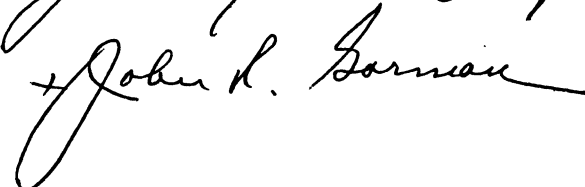
Sincerely,



John P. Madden



Julia Quinn Dempsey



John R. Gorman

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Preface

We accepted Cardinal Bernardin's invitation to serve on this special Commission because of our love for the Church and respect for the priesthood, along with a deep concern about an ever-widening scandal of sexual misconduct with minors by priests in the Archdiocese of Chicago.

We approached our task with some confidence because of our familiarity with the problem of child sexual abuse: as a judge in the Juvenile Division of the Cook County Court, as a longtime volunteer with the Maryville Academy and as a member of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Advisory Council, and as a clinical psychologist. Nevertheless, carrying out our mandate has been an important learning process for us. We have learned both how complex and how widespread a problem child sexual abuse is in our culture, and the traumatic impact it has on the lives of its victims. While many undoubtedly expected our Report months ago, we decided that the topic was so important and complex that we had no choice but to work on it in a careful, deliberate fashion.

The subject-matter of this Report is controversial and painful. Today, issues like child sexual abuse are easily politicized. We do not assume that everyone will agree with our conclusions or all of our recommendations. Some may say that we have gone too far, while others may accuse us of not having gone far enough. Many will also be tempted to turn immediately to a particular chapter to see how we handled a specific mandate or issue. Still, we urge

readers to read the entire text, because it stands as a whole. We have tried to avoid redundancy and repetition, and all the dimensions of the problem deserve careful attention.

Implementation of our recommendations is only a beginning because the topic itself is relatively new in the public forum in the United States. While child sexual abuse is centuries old, it has only been discussed and studied in some depth in recent years. As we worked our way through the research, we were struck with how tentative much of it is, and how many questions linger. As a matter of fact, when we formulated a series of questions to discuss with certain experts, we were told that our questions were "state of the art" and all of them needed further research. So, while we stand by our Report, we also acknowledge its limitations.

While this has been a difficult endeavor, it has helped us to recognize better the pain and suffering which child sexual abuse causes its victims. And while our hearts go out to the victims with compassion and deeper appreciation of their hurt and anger, we also recommit ourselves to eradicating this evil from our Church and society. This Report is not the end of a process, but only the beginning. To be faithful to its mission, the entire Church community must respond effectively to the physical, emotional, and sexual abuse and neglect of children. We trust that our Report will be a helpful point of departure in developing that response.