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TOWARD RESOLVING THE SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

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Former Catholic Navy chaplain on Cdl. Edwin O'Brien and the hierarchy's cover-up of homosexual predation



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By Gene Gomulka

The recent release of the Pennsylvania diocese victims' report involving sex abuse in six Pennsylvania Catholic dioceses has made international news. Even though Catholic Church leaders have argued that the sexual abuse crisis is history, the 900-page report says otherwise.

If Pope Francis would like the Roman Catholic Church to enjoy any degree of moral credibility, he needs to ensure that all the abusers are removed from ministry; that the bishops who failed to remove abusive priests are themselves removed from office; and that those who were reprimanded for confronting abusive priests and corrupt bishops are invited back to ensure that the disease has been completely eradicated.

No one in the church or the media to this date has ever addressed who buried the 1985 report "Sexual Molestation by Roman Catholic Clergy" (<https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/1216510-doyle-mouton-peterson-report-1985.html>), co-authored by Dominican Fr. Thomas Doyle, that laid out all

the steps the Catholic Church needed to take to correct its very serious and systematic clerical sexual abuse problem. While it was thought to have been hand carried to the Vatican by Cdl. John Krol of Philadelphia, what is not known is if and how much of it was shared by then-Cdl. Joseph Ratzinger with Pope John Paul II. Had either of them acted on the recommendations contained in the report, tens of thousands of young people could have been prevented from having been abused, and the Catholic Church in the United States could have found better use for the over \$4 billion it has spent on abuse settlements and legal fees.

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While the Spotlight team at *The Boston Globe* is given credit for initiating a chain of events that called international attention to widespread sex abuse carried out and covered up within the archdiocese of Boston, few people know what was the spark that prompted two Pennsylvania grand jury investigations of eight Pennsylvania Catholic dioceses. The answer to that question dates back to a three-month Blair County Pennsylvania civil trial in 1994 that centered around Fr. Francis Luddy, who admitted to having molested a teenage boy.

When retired Bp. James J. Hogan of the Altoona-Johnstown diocese testified in court when he first became aware of Fr. Luddy's abusive sexual behavior, he never realized that his testimony would be contradicted the following day by Msgr. Philip Saylor, who had no idea what date the bishop provided the previous day in court. Because the court believed that Bp. Hogan failed to report Fr. Luddy to civil authorities years before he said he first learned of the problem, the diocese lost the lawsuit and paid the former altar boy \$1.2 million.

Instead of learning from the mistakes of his predecessor, Bp. Joseph Adamec only made matters worse when he transferred Msgr. Saylor from a large and prestigious parish to a small and remote church in the extreme northwestern part of the diocese. If the transfer for telling the truth under oath was not bad enough, Adamec also issued Saylor a "precept of silence (<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/religion/855212/posts>)," threatening him with excommunication if he were to preach or talk about the bishop's mishandling of the sex abuse problems in the diocese. By reprising against Saylor while allowing a number of abusive priests to remain in ministry, Adamec planted the seeds that would grow into a scandal of international proportions.

“If Pope Francis would like the Roman Catholic Church to enjoy any degree of moral credibility, he needs to ensure that all the abusers are removed from ministry.



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When the 37th statewide investigating grand jury got underway in April of 2014, supervised by Cambria County President Judge Norman A. Krumenacker III, one of the first and key witnesses to offer testimony was Msgr. Saylor. Church leaders

who feared what the almost 90-year-old priest might say would have succeeded in preventing him from testifying were it not for an off-duty police officer who drove him the four-hour distance from State College to the courthouse in Pittsburgh.

It was the startling results of the grand jury investigation of the Altoona-Johnstown diocese and the Philadelphia archdiocese conducted by Attorney General Kathleen Kane that led Attorney General Josh Shapiro to pursue an investigation of the remaining six Pennsylvania dioceses that included Erie, Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Harrisburg, Scranton and Allentown.



(<http://thebishopsnew.com/>) If similar grand jury investigations were undertaken in other states throughout the country, the results would be the same in showing that the sexual abuse problem in the Catholic Church is far more serious than what the media and Church leaders were led to believe in the wake of the 2004 John Jay Report.

How is it that the authors of that 143-page report estimated that 4.3 percent of U.S. Catholic priests from 1950 to 2002 were

accused of sexually abusing minors when the figure during that same time period in the Boston archdiocese was 10.75 percent? The answer is that bishops lied about the extent of the problem within their dioceses. For example, then-Abp. Edwin F. O'Brien (http://www.bishop-accountability.org/usccb/natureandscope/dioceses/reports/milarch_rpt.pdf) of

the archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, reported that only "two such cases have come forward where active duty priest chaplains have been found guilty of engaging in immoral acts with minors."

When one examines even the incomplete list of abusive Catholic military chaplains composed by BishopAccountability.org (http://www.bishop-accountability.org/Military_Chaplains/), one sees the real number is not two, but rather around 100 (http://www.bishop-accountability.org/Military_Chaplains/). While then-Abp. O'Brien lied in 2004 about the extent of sex abuse among military chaplains lest he be deprived of a cardinal's red hat, which he received in 2012, he is certainly not the only Church leader who lied to the National Review Board (NRB).

Bishops will sometimes use the excuse that they do not have to report priests if the people they are having sex with are 18 or older. This happened in the case of Fr. John "Matt" Lee, a Catholic Navy chaplain stationed in Hawaii who was reported in 2002 to Abp. Edwin O'Brien for having a "live-in boyfriend." No investigation was undertaken of Lee, whose close friend in Hawaii was Captain (Monsignor) Joseph Estabrook whom Abp. O'Brien made his auxiliary bishop in 2004. Lee was later assigned to the U.S. Naval Academy and then to the Marine Corps Base in Quantico, Virginia, where, in 2007, he was charged and convicted (http://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2007/11_12/2007_12_14_Chibbaro_Navy%20Priests.htm) of aggravated assault, sodomy, conduct unbecoming an officer and failing to inform his sex partners that he was HIV positive.

When the media contacted O'Brien at the time of Lee's arrest, he said (http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2007-12-06/news/0712060169_1_chaplain-archdiocese-aggravated-assault), "When the Archdiocese for the Military Services became aware through Chaplain Lee that there was an accusation against him of immoral behavior with military personnel, we, along with the Archdiocese of Washington, removed his faculties immediately."

Fr. John "Matt" Lee escorted after his sentencing in 2007.



That quote is a perfect example of how to lie without technically lying. The real truth, however, is that the Military archdiocese, as early as 2002, became aware through another chaplain of an accusation against Lee of

immoral behavior and did nothing. After serving a two-year sentence, Lee was released only to be arrested again in 2014. Lee is currently serving a thirty year sentence (<https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/former-catholic-priest-sentenced-30-years-prison-production-and-distribution-child>) in a Delaware State Prison. Had O'Brien and Estabrook (who died in 2012) not "looked the other way," as many bishops did in the case of Theodore McCarrick, several young Naval Academy midshipmen and young Marines might not have been subjected to Lee's predatory behavior.

If the John Jay Report grossly underestimated the extent of the problem based on false information provided by the bishops, the report also came under attack by Al Notzon III (<https://www.catholicculture.org/news/headlines/index.cfm?storyid=18005>), a former chairman of the NRB that advises U.S. bishops in combating clerical sexual abuse. Notzon strongly disputed one of the study's findings that there is no link between homosexuality and clerical abuse when in fact the abusers were males and 80 percent of the victims were post-pubescent males.

Another NRB member and former psychiatrist-in-chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Dr. Paul McHugh, also rejected attempts to ignore the link between clerical abuse and homosexuality when he argued that the Church is dealing with a crisis of "homosexual predation on American Catholic youth (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/u.s.-bishops-report-reaffirms-link-between-clerical-abuse-scandals-and-homo>).\" If it is true that the percentage of homosexual bishops is higher than the percentage of gay priests in the United States, then that might help explain why sexual abuse mainly involving males was underreported and why male on male abuse is being misinterpreted as something other than homosexual behavior.

It remains to be seen how much Pope Francis can combat clerical sexual abuse when so many U.S. bishops are believed to have the same sexual orientation as Cdl. Theodore McCarrick. Bishop Roberto Morlino (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/bishop-morlino-homosexual-subculture-source-of-devastation-in-the-church-54040>) of Madison, Wisconsin, in

a pastoral letter released on Aug. 18, 2018, wrote, "It is time to admit that there is a homosexual subculture within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church that is wreaking great devastation in the vineyard of the Lord."

Not all bishops are willing to make this admission. Chicago Cdl. Blase Cupich was able to get Pope Francis to echo his belief that the real cause for the abuse crisis is "a culture of clericalism

(<https://www.newwaysministry.org/2018/08/08/cardinal-cupich-on-sexual-abuse-its-clerical-culture-not-gay-priests-at-fault/>) in which some who are ordained feel they are privileged and therefore protected so that they can do what they want." The main reason many people have difficulty in accepting this thesis is because 80 percent of abuse victims are teenage males.

If many Catholics are responding to Pope Francis and Cdl. Cupich by saying, "Clerical sex abuse has everything to do with homosexuality" (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/catholics-respond-to-cdl.-cupich-clerical-sex-abuse-has-everything-to-do-wi>)," it's because the "clericalism" argument would only hold water if there were as many teenage girls being abused as teenage boys.

Rome-based journalist Robert Mickens wrote (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/07/23/the-catholic-churchs-sex-abuse-scandals-show-it-has-a-gay-priest-problem-theyre-trapped-in-the-closet/?utm_term=.498e49370ac8), "While no adult who is of sound psychosexual health habitually preys on those who are vulnerable, there is no denying that homosexuality is a key component to the clergy sex abuse crisis. With such a high percentage of priests with a homosexual orientation, this should not be surprising."

“Justice also requires that all of those in Church leadership who

knew of the former cardinal's alleged crimes and sexual misconduct and did nothing be held accountable for their refusal to act thereby enabling others to be hurt.



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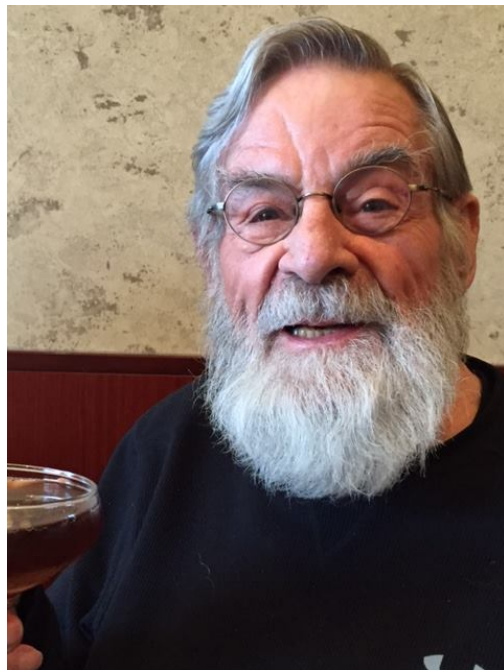
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In response to media reports that many members of the U.S. Catholic hierarchy were aware of former Cdl. McCarrick's sexual escapades with seminarians and did nothing, Bp. Michael F. Olson (<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/texas-bishop-hold-mccarrick-and-his-enablers-accountable-73681>) of Fort Worth, Texas, wrote, "Justice also requires that all of those in Church leadership who knew of the former cardinal's alleged crimes and sexual misconduct and did nothing be held accountable for their refusal to act thereby enabling others to be hurt."

When the late Richard Sipe, the foremost expert on clerical sexual abuse, brought the sexual escapades of McCarrick in great detail to the attention of Bp. Robert McElroy of San Diego, McElroy did nothing. Following Sipe's death on Aug. 8, 2018, McElroy defended his failure to respond to the abuse allegations by saying that it was "impossible to know what was real and what was rumor" (<https://www.ncronline.org/news/accountability/san-diego-bishop-responds-survivor-advocate-letter-alleged-abuse-mccarrick>)."

However, many people who have read Sipe's July 28, 2016 letter (<http://www.awrsipe.com/Correspondence/McElroy-2016-07-28-rev.pdf>) concluded that there was more than sufficient evidence to justify a recommendation on McElroy's part that McCarrick be investigated.

Richard Sipe



The sexual abuse scandal has had a negative impact on vocations to the priesthood. At the end of 2000, twelve months before *The Boston Globe* called attention to the sex abuse problem in the Catholic Church, there were 41,399 priests in the United States. At the end of 2017, six months before McCarrick resigned amid abuse accusations, there were 37,181 priests (<https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>) — a decline of a little more than 10 percent over a 17-year period.

When Abp. Edwin O'Brien was informed in a letter dated May 6, 2002 that one of his chaplains heard that a senior enlisted sailor who retired from the Navy and entered the seminary left after he grew tired of being "hit on" by gay seminarians, he did nothing when this was brought to his attention. This is the same archbishop who not only grossly underreported sexual abuse among military chaplains, but also the same cleric Pope Benedict chose to oversee a 2005–2006 study of all Catholic seminaries in the United States.

The results of the study he coordinated concluded that U.S. seminaries are "in general, healthy" (<https://www.osv.com/OSVNewsweekly/National/Article/TabId/717/ArtMID/13622/ArticleID/8348/Report-finds-US-seminaries-generally-healthy.aspx>). If the results of this seminary study are as reliable as the results of the John Jay Report, one might be led to question how "healthy" U.S. seminaries really are.

A large number of predator priests found guilty of sexual abuse (including Fr. Francis Luddy whose abuse case was the spark that ignited the Pennsylvania investigation) admit to having been sexually abused themselves while they were seminarians (<http://www.altoonamirror.com/news/local-news/2016/03/das-advised-adamec-to-report-sex-abuse-for-investigation-prosecution/>). What former Cdl. Theodore McCarrick was guilty of doing, and what other homosexual bishops, rectors, faculty members and priests do to and with seminarians, can result in creating more predator priests.

If the Pope does not remove bishops who carry out, underreport or cover up sexual abuse; if the true health of seminaries is misrepresented as much as sexual abuse was underreported; and if studies are accurate that show that no more than 50 percent of priests and bishops practice celibacy (<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2519&dat=19900814&id=cIBeAAAAIbAJ&sjid=42ENAAAAIbAJ&pg=1382,4510823>) at any given time, then what hope does one have that the current crisis will be resolved?

Gene Thomas Gomulka is a retired Navy (captain) Chaplain in Coronado, California who was a priest (monsignor) of the Altoona-Johnstown diocese and who served on active duty at Marine Corps and Navy commands for over 24 years until his retirement in 2004.

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