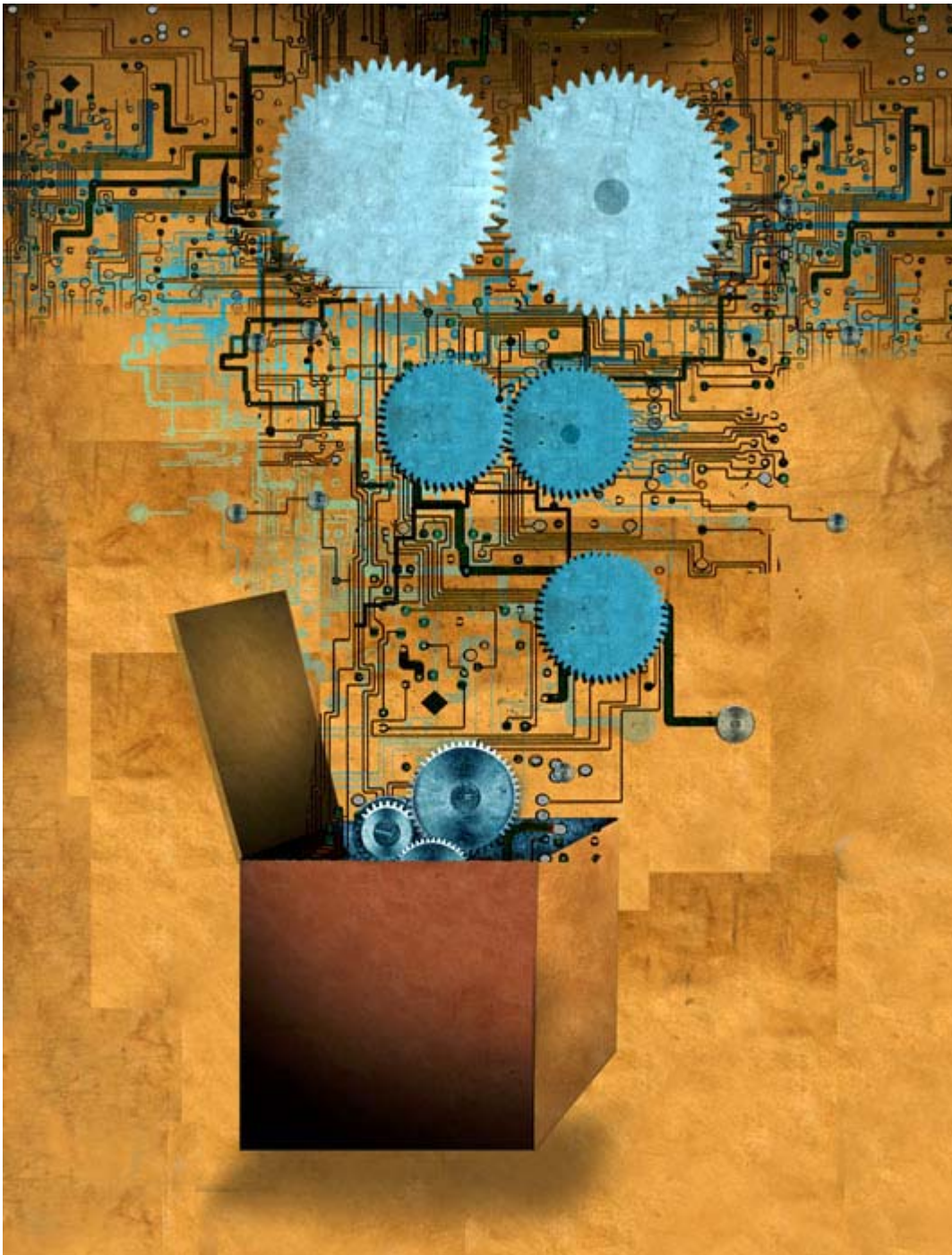


CODE WORDS TO HIDE SEX ABUSE

Revised 10 August 2009



If one is searching church documents for evidence of a church's prior knowledge of sexually abusing priests he will rarely find the words *pedophile, abuser, sex*, or any other direct reference to actual sexually abusive behavior. Even in correspondence with medical providers **code words** and euphemisms are used. All of the euphemistic terms or phrases used to describe a priest who is sexually abusing minors listed below were found in medical, church, or criminal records. The seminary records of men who subsequently abuse are also variously coded; the most commonly recorded indicator of future sexual misbehavior is **"immaturity"** or **"problem personality."**

The longstanding knowledge of sexual abuse by priests among the hierarchy becomes decipherable as more and more church documents come to light and are examined. A Cardinal recently (2006) admitted what we have known for a long time, that "codes" are used between bishops to indicate a priest is having problems with sex. This cardinal's particular code when he sent a sex-abusing priest to the jurisdiction of another Catholic Cardinal was—he is coming for **"HEALTH AND FAMILY REASONS."** He not only admitted that *it was a code that any bishop or cardinal would understand*, but he also tried to defend his position in sending the priest, who was soon arrested for sexual assault on minors in his new placement, because he thought the priest was **"ONLY HOMOSEXUAL."**¹

As an increasing number of documents including correspondence and depositions become available to the public the miasma of church **codes** to cover clergy sexual abuse grows to unbelievable dimensions. The LA Archdiocese provides dramatic examples like the exchange between cardinals cited above. Another example: A victim—in this instance a policeman—reported in writing to law enforcement authorities **"unlawful sexual behaviors"** and **"exchange of sexual favors"** between a teen and a priest. The religious superior who maintained the priest on the faculty of a high school where he subsequently offended again reported that the behavior was merely **INAPPROPRIATE HORSEPLAY & UNPROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR. Facts are frequently lost in translation from victim reports to church records.**

Codes and Euphemisms in Psychiatry

¹ Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera to Cardinal Roger Mahony

The church has not been alone in handling sex abuse by Catholic bishops and priests as a hot potato and behavior that had to be disguised with alternative names to identify and record it at the same time to hide it. I know from my years in association and observation of the psychiatric community and reviewing many medical histories of priests that pedophilia (under its current and appropriate definition) was noted, but classified and treated under various monikers. Sexual activity by priests was concealed and codified especially in Catholic institutions. In my years of training and on the staff of a hospital that treated numerous priests, a noteworthy number who were in actuality pedophiles not one was given that designation as a primary diagnosis. (It is of public record that minor abusing priests Fr. John Goehgan and Fr. David Holley and dozens of others were treated at the hospital where I worked.) Priests' sexual activity was noted and subsumed under some more acceptable psychiatric and, at the time, available diagnosis.

This distortion was not entirely the fault of the treating institutions. Rarely did bishops "play it straight with the staff." Even in referring an offending priest for treatment many bishops concealed or twisted the facts to make the priest (diocese) look as good as possible. On discharge, many bishops and superiors often disregarded or twisted the recommendations of the psychiatric staff to suit their own judgment and needs.

Also, some Catholic treating institutions were compromised. They destroyed medical documents that witnessed criminal behavior and told bishops to do the same² or in line with the recommendation of Bishop John Quinn, sent documents to the office of the Apostolic Delegate in Washington, DC to seal them under diplomatic immunity.³ After 1985 at least one archdiocese hired a man specifically to "cleanse the files."⁴ Other dioceses made the same arrangements with members of their staff.⁵

From the 1920s through the 1950s **SCHIZOPHRENIC** was a commonly used designation for a priest who was involved in sex with children. Fr. Gerald Fitzgerald wrote in 1957 to a bishop who wanted to send a pedophile priest to Via Coeli, "From our long experience with characters of this

² Fr. Liam Hoare to Thomas O'Brien, bishop of Phoenix, 2/23/89

³ Bishop A.J. Quinn, auxiliary of Cleveland 1990 address to the Midwest Canon Law Society

⁴ Personal communication

⁵ Witnesses from NYC 1993 and San Diego 2006

type...most of these men would be clinically classified as schizophrenic.”⁶ He was also convinced by that time that priests who got involved sexually with children could not be cured.

Hospital records from 1982 give the diagnosis of “paranoid schizophrenic” to a priest who had been treated twice before for “depression.” He admitted a history of abusing at least five boys a year during the course of his ministry. The reason for this categorization did have logic: the conscious decision of a priest was to be celibate. He could not be a priest if he did not promise celibacy. Since he wanted to be a clergyman and his behavior was diametrically opposed to this desire he had to have a “split-personality.” His behavior demonstrated primarily that he was “crazy” and schizophrenia was an available diagnosis at that time. If his craziness could be controlled he would behave appropriately; but that diagnosis was not seen as amenable to cure just management.

ALCOHOLISM has long been known as a problem among Catholic clergy. The lifetime incidence of alcoholism is twice as high in Catholic clergy (20 percent) than recorded in the general population. Hospital and treatment centers for priests contemplated and established since the 1930s always named alcohol abuse as one major motivation for founding these centers. Father Thomas Verner Moore, M.D. had plans drawn up for a psychiatric hospital on the campus of Catholic University with the treatment of alcoholic priests as one of the major targets.⁷ “Sister Mary Ignatia Gavin pioneered the concept of medical treatment for addiction when alcoholism was thought to result from irreversible moral failure. Gavin founded the world’s first alcohol addiction treatment center in 1939 at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio.⁸ The first treatment center designed exclusively for the treatment of alcoholic priests was founded as Guest House, in Lake Orion, MI in 1956. But alcohol problems of priests were a factor in the founding in 1947 of St. John Vianney Hospital in Downingtown, PA—a psychiatric hospital exclusively for clergy—Via Coeli in 1948 and St. Luke Institute in 1981. But the awareness of the sexual problems hidden behind alcohol moved Guest House in the 1990s to refuse sexually addicted men entrance to their program, at the same time that the awareness of the

⁶ Fr. Fitzgerald to Brady 9/57

⁷ Benedict Neenan, *Thomas Verner Moore: Psychiatrist, Educator and Monk*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, NJ: 2000.

⁸ National Catholic Reporter, February 23, 2007.

connection between substance abuse and sex addiction motivated Via Coeli (1976) and later St. Luke's (1985) to devise and initiate specific treatment protocols for clergy-sex-addiction.

History of the psychiatric treatment of priests with sexual problems, including abuse of minors clearly demonstrates that **ALCOHOLIC** was the name given to these men—partly because they were drinking too much and causing—as said in church circles, *admiratio populi*—scandal. But in truth, scores of the priests and bishops in this group were acting out sexually with children or adolescents. Drinking was a more benign diagnosis—less damaging to the reputation of the clergy and the church than any direct recognition of sexual involvement. It was not politically tolerable to use the word *pervert*.

The logic behind this psychiatric decision rested in the belief “if you could keep father sober, he would not act in these *sinful* ways.” Some how the idea that a person was drunk at the time of a sexual encounter rendered the sexual element more understandable and less culpable.

The psychiatric designation **DEPRESSION** is well known and common in US culture. Mental health research has estimated that 7.9 to 8.6 percent of adults will experience a major depression during their lifetime.⁹ During my years in training and on the staff of a Catholic hospital¹⁰ it was common to have a priest patient who had sexually abused minors to be diagnosed as suffering from depression. And indeed, most suffered from depressive symptoms. They had been caught. Either the police or some church authority noted the sexual behavior and had to do something about the impending scandal or danger of incarceration. The displacement, uncertainty about the future, the fear of a mental hospital setting, embracement and loss of self-esteem, conspired to make the priest or bishop feel depressed.

But in many cases the diagnosis was rendered as a cover, diminishment, or disregard of the major psychiatric element—inability to control sexual behavior toward children and adolescents. It sounded much better to say that father was in the hospital for depression (or exhaustion, another euphemism) than to admit he was caught abusing children or call him a pervert.

⁹ *DSM-IV*. 2005 imprint. Pp. 339-345.

¹⁰ Seton Psychiatric Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland 1965-1970.

The logic of diagnosing depression is similar to that of calling a sex-abusing priest an alcoholic—*If we can help father feel better, enhance his self-esteem, and control his dark moods he won't do these bad things.* The excuse of alcohol has been used notable and almost laughably when public figures have been caught in embarrassing sexual misbehavior. “I was drinking,” they say. For example Congressman Michael Foley of Florida resigned his post in 2006 because of sexual advances he made to young Congressional Pages. In the aftermath he was “depressed,” entered treatment for alcohol addiction and then announced another factor often seen as superior to being identified as an abuser of minors—“I’m homosexual.” This triad of drink, depression, and gay identity is often juggled around to find the most acceptable—or least damaging—public explanation of criminal behavior.

Sometimes the sexual element in behavior was too obvious or public to deny on admission to a psychiatric hospital. Even then the fact that a child had been abused by a priest had to be softened and covered as much as possible. The offending priest was treated for a psychiatric disorder (until 1973 when it was dropped from the DSM): he was called a **HOMOSEXUAL**.

In 1968 this psychiatric cover was somewhat understandable. The texts recorded, *“Pedophilia, or a pathological sexual interest in children is regarded as a variant of homosexuality in which the homosexual strivings are directed toward children.”* The perpetrator was considered weak and impotent, his actions reincarnations of his wishes for his mother’s love, and because of insecurity and self-doubt he functioned on an immature psychosexual level.¹¹

This confusion of pedophilia (ephebophilia) and homosexuality is long-standing and detrimental to the understanding and treatment of men who are genuinely addicted to sex with minors. In a 1957 psychological evaluation made by Loyola University Chicago of a priest involved sexually with minors his activity was labeled **UNDESIRABLE PRACTICES**.

In the 1970s treatment centers for clergy like the House of Affirmation were established staffed by priests and other Catholic workers, mostly with M.A. degrees, under the supervision of a psychologist or psychiatrist. Priests who had sexually abused minors were labeled in

¹¹ Lawrence C. Kolb, M.D., *Noyes' Modern Clinical Psychiatry*, Seventh Edition. W.B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia: 1968.

documents to bishops with idiosyncratic diagnoses such as “suffering from **MODERATE FRUSTRATION NEUROSIS.**” Lack of sexual control was not spelled out but recorded simply as “Father has an **AREA OF DIFFICULTY.**” Other reports to bishops referred to “father’s **PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR**” and his “**SERIOUS WEAKNESS.**” (Records 1974)

Rather than any direct reference to sex or sexual behavior, even when it is clear that sexual behavior was involved, records of priest abusers often use some of the following *code words*:

- **MORAL IMPEDIMENT**
- **DUBIOUS PERSONALITY,**
- **INDISCRETION, IMPRUDENCE,**
- **TROUBLESOME INVOLVEMENTS,**
- **PARTICULAR DILEMMA,**
- **UNFORTUNATE INCIDENTS,**
- **UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION,**
- **EXCESSIVE STRESS,**
- **MISUNDERSTANDINGS,**
- **PROBLEM,**
- **EFFEMINATE,**
- **MISTAKES,**
- **CHARACTER FLAW. (2008)**

The Law and the Church

Prosecution and incarceration have not been the usual path for priests and bishops who have been found to abuse minors or been discovered in other sexually compromising circumstances:

- *In 1967 Monsignor Oliver was arrested consequent to picking up a 15 year-old hitchhiker, driving him to his (the cleric’s) parent’s home, forcing alcohol on him, and attempting to rape him. The boy escaped from the house (breaking some furniture in the process) and screaming, roused a neighbor. When the police came at 1:30 A.M. they found the boy confused and distraught lying on the floor of the neighbor’s home. The police traced the priest’s identity through his parent’s home.*

What happened?

The Police handled it: “by filing a secret information with the Court.”

The Police determined: “more harm than good could be done by prosecution.”

The Sheriff directed: “**present the information to Bishop Green and let him handle the matter, as has been done in the past.**”

The Police discounted the idea that the Msgr. might be an “active or latent-homosexual” but that he could be “**UNDER SEVERE STRAIN** combined with **APPARENT INTOXICATION.**” (Emphasis mine)

Church response?

Monsignor was sent to a Catholic General hospital for a 30-day check-up and the announcement was made that he was recuperating from **EXHAUSTION** from **OVER WORK.**

As a parochial dean in 1983 he destroyed written complaints about child abuse by another priest.

He was promoted and continued in ministry until 2000.

- *In 1987 a bishop was arrested for sexual solicitation at a truck stop in Massachusetts. The arresting officer, a devout Catholic, did not discover that the man was a bishop from another state until after he had written the citation. He and his superior were concerned about the possible adverse consequences. The officer of the State Police in charge called the Catholic Chaplain and had him drive the bishop home in the neighboring state. The priest chaplain made a note of the incident. The arresting officer was troubled by his part in the incident and feared scandal. He consulted a well-placed cleric who assured him that he had not betrayed the church by doing his duty. He also made a note of the incident. (Personal contact with reporters)*

The outcome?

All police records were destroyed by some unknown agent.

This event among others involving minor boys was kept **SECRET** by the church and the law.

Although allegations of this bishop abusing orphans while he was a seminarian are on record, they never have been made public.

Priests and bishops have been sent for *treatment* to Catholic hospitals under court order. The arrangement, informal or formal, was an agreement that the understanding judge would not press, or would suspend, charges if the cleric would submit to psychiatric treatment. Senior members of the staff of Seton testified that the practice was long-standing there.

No statement can be clearer about the cozy cooperation between the law and religion-related psychiatric centers than that of Dr. Frank Valcour, the medical director of St. Luke's Institute when he wrote on December 10, 1992—“*Because sexual behavior disorders often involve felonious acts many of our patients have been adjudicated. Some have been on probationary status others have been in treatment in lieu of jail time. Still others have been sent to treatment with us as part of a plea-bargain.*”

Father Gerald Fitzgerald reminded a bishop who sent a priest for abusing minors in 1953, that priests were spared criminal prosecution *only* because they were clerics.¹²

The Church Speaks In Latin

It may surprise some people to know that even in the early 1960s the moral theology books used in seminaries could be in English save for the chapters on the sixth and ninth commandments. They were written in Latin—entitled *De Sexto*—as if it would take a classical language scholar to know what those mysterious chapters were all about. It is but one more indication of the degree of secrecy accorded anything that had to do with sex—the forbidden, except to the *Initiate*. Coitus was carefully defined—in Latin—so that priests would know the importance of a valid marriage—*ratum et consumatum*: that is the couple had to take vows before a priest and they had to have complete intercourse.

When I was ordained in 1959, priests in parishes were given a pamphlet that was to be reviewed with an engaged couple **ONLY** the night before the wedding ceremony. The absurdity of giving marital instructions at the last minute lest the couple be tempted to sin is only secondary to presuming the competence of the instructor.

¹² Fitzgerald letter to Bishop--/ also 1963 letter to Vincent Hines bishop of Norwich, CT

Stuprum is a classic term used for centuries to indicate sodomy. Although it has a long history and was used to designate that activity with men or women it is most frequently used in church documents to indicated sex of a priest with a minor, usually a boy.¹³

In chancery documents from 1959 I found the phrase *De re turpi cum infantibus* to describe a priest in trouble. That is a pretty clear admission of the fact of child abuse, of course, meant only for clerical eyes.¹⁴

Crimen or *Delict* (literally church terms for crime) are other terms frequently found in church documents to cover a multitude of sins without having to be explicit. They are a bit more vague because they are not exclusively reserved for sexual offences against children. They can, among other things, indicate abuse against adult men or women.

Delictus contra naturam cum eodem sexu is a phrase I found in records of Via Coeli to a bishop as late as 1963. Literally it could mean homosexual activity, but it is in the record of a notorious sexual abuser of boys. In 1964 the treatment center simplified the term to **Code 3**.¹⁵

In a report about a candidate whose name had been submitted for consideration for ordination to the episcopacy the objection was that he had *Mulier* (women) problems.

Bishops, Psychological Testing & Catholic Treatment Centers

Many codes can be seen in church correspondence about candidates for the priesthood where the words *Problem* or *Incident* remain undefined, but in the argot of the clerical system and future validation they were clearly related to sexual impropriety. The terms *Dishonest act* and *Moment of Hesitation* are found in the file of a seminarian to cover sexual difficulties (Fr. Titian Miani, 08). Subsequently he was cited for numerous sexual violation of minors as a priest.

¹³: Lansing, Carol, *Gender and civic authority: sexual control in a medieval Italian town*. Journal of Social History: 9/22/1997.

¹⁴

¹⁵ Via Coeli documents re: Fr. Bissonette, 1963-1964

REEDUCATION was the term that Bishop Angelo Daniel used to explain why he sent a priest found in bed with a man's wife to another parish assignment. He said that he could not hold this "one" failure against a priest who had done good work as if this were an act and not a habit. (14 Sept. 08)

In 1980 the term **ADVERSE HOMOSEXUALITY** was used in documents of abusing priests sent to a retreat house that billed itself as a "spiritual and psychiatric center for the treatment of priests and religious" with this condition.¹⁶

Frank Valcour, the medical director of St. Luke Institute, wrote on November 4, 1992, "*Our strength is in the treatment of addictive disorders including sexual disorders. Over the past seven years we have evaluated and or treated over 300 individuals with serious sexual behavior problems including child molestation.*"¹⁷

Bishops consistently used vague terms and the most developed code words when they communicated with each other and treatment facilities about a priest who was causing some concern over his sexual behavior. Often reference to sex with minors was simply stated as "father is having a **PROBLEM.**" Bishops knew what that meant. In addition to that the bishops frequently dissimulated when they referred a priest to a treating psychiatrist by posing the presenting problem as "father is depressed" or "father is drinking too much."

From the very beginning of founding the Servants of the Paraclete Fr. Fitzgerald was faced with requests to admit priests who had some sort of sexual behavior as the presenting concern. Already in 1948 Fr. Fitzgerald said that his house (Via Coeli) was packed with alcoholic priests and declined to accept a priest who implied a 'problem' with children. His stated policy was to "refuse problem cases that involved abnormalities in sex." He writes with sympathy to the priest " who has fallen under the spell of **ABNORMAL RELATIONS.**"¹⁸

¹⁶ Missionhurst Retreat Center, Arlington, Virginia run by the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales.

¹⁷ Dr. Frank Valcour letter.

¹⁸ G.F Letter to a pastor September 27, 1948

In 1957 Bishop Buddy of San Diego sent a priest to Via Coeli who had abused several minor girls with the description that he had made some **MISTAKES** that were so well known he would be ineffective in his diocese. He went on to say that if the priest learned “discretion” he could be very useful to another bishop.¹⁷

INDISCRETION is another code word that often hides sex abuse. Bishop William Curlin of Charlotte, N.C. justified his decision to keep a priest at his assignment after he knew from the priest that abused a boy, but labeled it an indiscretion.

FEARS SURROUNDING HUMAN FEELING, RELATIONSHIPS AND CLOSENESS are the words used to describe the conflicts of a priest accused of sexual activity with a minor boy. (Southdown 1983)

MORAL IMPEDIMENT is a phrase found in the seminary record of a priest (Fr. Daniel McGuire, SJ) who was ordained despite it; he went on to a prominent clerical career as a confessor and retreat master. He was convicted of sexual abuse of minors and held in prison prior to sentencing, (December 2008).

Since 1950 psychological **TESTING** or interviews have become somewhat standard for entrance into seminaries and religious orders. All of the terms above can be found in psychologists’ reports and test results. **PSYCHOLOGICALLY IMMATURE** and **EMOTIONALLY UNSTABLE** are common terms found in reports of men who have nevertheless been allowed to proceed to ordination and subsequently acted out sexually. My opinion is that many bishops and superiors put little stock or trust in psychology or psychiatry and tended to trust their own intuition.

TRANSFERS from one seminary to another or from one order to another should always be carefully investigated. When reasons are vague, ambiguous

By 1957 Fitzgerald was experienced enough with the dynamic of child abuse that he could speak more directly about it and favored that priests who even “attempted to seduce little boys or girls” should be automatically and involuntarily laicized. He called child –abusing-priests “**DEVILS**” and “ this

¹⁹Buddy to G.F. re: Fr. Franz Rubio 1957

class of **RATTLESNAKE**.” He wanted them isolated on an island preserve, “too good for these vipers.” He appealed to scripture, “it would be better they had not been born.”¹⁸ Even at this time Fitzgerald was seeking an island in the Caribbean where priest sex offenders of minors could be isolated. The Paracletes bought property on the island of

Some bishops could write to Fitzgerald with somewhat more candor by 1957, for instance the referral of Fr. John T. Sullivan from New Hampshire that listed the cause as: “**SCANDAL CAUSING ESCAPADES WITH YOUNG GIRLS**.” The fact that young women were involved made greater candor possible.¹⁹

By 1963 Fitzgerald had expanded his centers from Jemez Springs, NM, to Albuquerque, to Cheery Valley, CA, St. Louis, MO, Nevis, MN, a seminary in Vermont, a treatment center in Scotland, and a Generalate in Rome. He was asked to make a report to the Pope. By then Fitzgerald estimated that fully one third of all the priests sent to his centers were there because of problems with minors, 20 percent were there because of **AFFAIRS OF THE HEART**, (sexual involvement with women) and only 50 percent for alcoholism.

In spite of Fitzgerald’s opposition to accepting sex abusers as **GUESTS** in his facilities (priests were not called patients or clients) the demand from bishops was clear and persistent. The cover of alcoholism was evaporating to expose underlying sexual dynamics.

What amounted to a palace revolt that unseated Fitzgerald from control of the organization coincided with the departure of Archbishop Byrne who had been considered the co-founder of the Paracletes and the appointment of James P. Davis in 1964 to head the Santa Fe Archdiocese.

Fitzgerald’s hopes to send priests who abused minors to Carriacou the Caribbean island he had purchased for that purpose were dashed when the new archbishop took matters to Rome. The Servants were ordered to sell

²⁰G.F Letter to Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne, September 18, 1957

¹⁹ Bishop Matthew Brady, Manchester NH 1957 to Gerald Fitzgerald re: Fr. John T. Sullivan who subsequently applied to 17 dioceses for work. He was accepted into another diocese and re-offended. It is interesting to note the dioceses he chose to apply for because they were the ones that had a reputation of receiving problem priests.

their property on the island that they already remodeled and where 2 priests of the order were stationed.

Also, Fitzgerald's ideal of a spiritual cure was also curtailed when he was "forced" to use AA as part of a treatment modality. Psychiatry was low on his list of interventions, but as the requests for treatment increased he capitulated to staff demands for help. In addition, some bishops and superiors sent priests to the Servants on a psychiatric recommendation.

This shift in the fundamental thinking about the treatment of problem priests did not come easily. Cardinal Antoniutti, secretary of the Congregation for Religious, wrote in 1966 what was considered a mandate "to implement lay programs and place greater reliance on lay psychologists and psychiatrists."¹⁹

In 1966 the Paracletes hired a lay psychologist, Dr. John Salazar, to head up their program. This was a response to the cardinal's instruction to institute "methods of rehabilitation of the guests...striving to effect a wise selection of those mental and physical means which help the workings of grace."²⁰

In the early 1970s in the persons of Frs. Michael Foley and William Perri the Servants trained-for, developed, and instituted a special modality to diagnose and treat sexually offending priests particularly those who were involved with minors.

TROUBLESOME INVOLVEMENTS is a label that indicates sexual activity, but usually with adult women or men. A priest considered a sexual addict, had sexual activity with many women over a forty-year period including several long-term relationships (at least 7 women recorded, one as young as 17) fathered 4 children, visited prostitutes, etc. After several reports to his superiors of his activity that was common knowledge, his provincial told him to see a psychiatrist. The superior did not mention women or sex, only concern over "your **FREQUENT AND LONGLASTING INVOLVEMENTS.**" The priest was given a new assignment where he was not known, but the pattern of his behavior continued for another twenty years.

¹⁹ Affidavit of Fr. Joseph Mc Namara, 17 November 1993.

²⁰ Cardinal Antoniutti to Fr. Temple, 23 March 1966.

IRREGULAR RELATIONSHIP (1969 diocesan file)

An ***ENTANGLED FRIENDSHIP*** was noted on a seminary evaluation of a man who eventually as a priest got involved with minors.²⁰

Being ***OVER FAMILIAR*** with as vague a group as “lay people” can be found in bishops’ correspondence, or it can be more specific such as, “with boys working at the parish.” It means sexual abuse.

“Father is in an ***UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION***” or caught up in ***UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR PATTERNS***, or was ***IMPRUDENT***, or has been involved in some ***UNFORTUNATE INCIDENTS***” are all code words that indicated sexual misbehavior especially with minors in communication from bishops and superiors referring priests to treatment facilities.

As programs for sexual treatment like those of the Paracletes, St. Luke’s, Institute of Living, the University of Minnesota, etc. proliferated the bishops echoed more psychologically sophisticated terms when they sent priests for treatment. These included the codes such as ***BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS***, ***IMMATURE***, ***ADJUSTMENT PROBLEM*** or on occasion rather directly ***INAPPROPRIATE ASSOCIATION WITH A MINOR***.

These terms went back and forth between treatment facilities and bishops even as the psychiatric treatment centers became more precise in recording the terms ***PEDOPHILIA*** and ***EPHEBOPHILIA***. Evaluations and diagnoses often times reflect a gentler and less specific term—***SEXUAL DISORDER NOS*** (not otherwise specified)—that can cover concern over sexual identity, function, relationships, etc.

Many of these same code words appear in the **seminary records** of men subsequently accused of abuse. The Case of Fr. Ryan Erikson, who was convicted of double homicide and committed suicide, revealed that his seminary record held the judgment: “he wears his ***CASSOCK TO HIDE HIS PROMISCUITY***.” He was also accused of “***HERESY***.” There were more direct references to his ***INDISCRETION*** with minor boys, but none

²⁰ Mt. St. Mary’s, Emmetsburg, MD, 1989

of the direct and coded information hindered his ordination in 2002 for the Superior WI diocese.

Bishops and Public Exposure

The media coverage of high profile abuse cases has made the reporting of clergy behavior clearer and more direct: it is not uncommon to read that the priest **ABUSED** a child or adolescent. The press frequently used the word pedophilia; sometimes imprecisely when it designates sex with an adolescent. **TOUCHING**, as well as abuse are terms often used to designate behavior that more accurately could be named **RAPE**.

It is in the legal system that the most precise description of the actual behavior of the priest is recorded. The courts seal many of these records and conceal the full horrors of them from the public. For instance, “touch” was the public code used when a priest used his semen to anoint the forehead of his 13-year-old boy victim. It was also the public report of the priest who used, what he said, was a consecrated host to touch the vagina of his child victim, telling her that this gesture was to confirm the sanctity of his sexual activity with her.

The sordid and painful experiences of victims of abuse are probably most directly related within the confines of therapeutic treatment. Also the adversarial deposition and trial for the victim in the process of suing the priest abuser and the church demands a level of clarity and precision not otherwise needed.

Public outrage has forced many bishops to make an **APOLOGY FOR THE SUFFERING OF THE VICTIM**. Rarely does it have the ring of a personal confession or regret. Frequently a victim reporting his or her experience is met with the question of **MISUNDERSTANDING** the priest’s movement or intentions.

On record a few strong priests have taken the pulpit to say, “I am an alcoholic and I am going for treatment.” Most often, official pronouncements of a priest’s or bishop’s absence for treatment declare that the person is **EXHAUSTED** or under sever strain.

As recently as 2003 (and 1994) two bishops announced that a priest was leaving the parish for reasons of a *HEALTH AND REST* or *SABBATICAL*. Both were sexual offenders.

Some priests and bishops who have been described as *OVER WORKED* or *RETIRED FOR MEDICAL REASONS* were, in fact, being treated for their sexual activity. Of course, the fact that some priests and bishops leave their posts because they are genuinely ill, overworked, and need to retire causes confusion and injustice.

TICKLING, HORSE PLAY or *WRESTLING* are words used to cover up sexual grooming or frank sexual activity and abuse. The most extreme example I know of occurred in the conduct of a young assistant pastor who established a sexual bond with a boy when he was 15 and 16. One of “games” the priest played with the boy while both were naked involved tying him to the bed and then sodomizing him. On one occasion the boy freed one of his legs and began flailing around. In the process he hit the wall hard enough to put a hole in it. The pastor responded to the ruckus, came into the room, and said, “You’re going to have to pay for the repair of that damage. Later when the abuse was litigated the pastor said he thought they were just “horsing around.”

These words—tickling, horsing around, wrestling— that intimate playfulness and innocence have been used repeatedly by abusers and their lawyers to deny, minimize, and disarm the actual behavior even if they see it with their own eyes. Words that sanitize abuse do nothing to help heal the profound effects of abuse of minors.

Bishops have had a good deal to say about priests and bishops who abuse minors. “Pedophile clergy were *AFFLICTED*—not sinful”²¹. Priests who abused “Had made *SOME ERRORS IN JUDGMENT*.”²² Using the excuse that everyone sins, some bishops bypass that fact of criminality and the harm done to victims to assert “**Sinners deserve forgiveness.**” “**It (abuse) is in the past.**” “**The statute of limitations has run out.**” This attitude of bishops discounts the real nature of abuse by clergy and the destruction it imposes.

²¹. Bishop Matthew Clark of Rochester, N.Y. in a 1990 statement quoted by Brooks Edgerton in the Dallas Morning News

²². Bishop Patrick Cooney of Detroit excused Fr. Gerald Shirilla to The Detroit Free Press in 2002.

Nicknames of seminarians, priests, and bishops bandied around within clerical circles often offer an insight into problems and the sexual tone of the person in question and the institution. “**Peaches**” (Bishop Larocque) “**Bubbles**”=(Cardinal Spellman) “**Mother**” & “**Lola**”= (specific superiors) and “**Lady Wakefield**”=(Cardinal Baum) “**Uncle Ted**” =(Cardinal McCarrick) are all monikers that have been recorded within the clerical culture about superiors who priests cited as gay, sexually active, or permissive. Sometimes nicknames filter into the seminary records and are flags for deviant behaviors.

***Sexual orientation and the source of sexual excitation
are separate entities.***

The record of the sexual abuse history of one religious priest was recorded as concern over a “violent streak.” (Salesian files) Another term to code concern about homosexual acting out is contained in the term **PARTICULAR FRIENDSHIP** or **PT** for further codification. (Cf. *the Catholic Encyclopedia* 1967 for the connection with homosexuality) A code in the Jesuit rule stated **NEVER TWO ALWAYS THREE**. The “no two alone” rule was clearly to avoid the possibility of sexual exchanges. **SENTAMENTAL ATTACHMENT** was another code for a dangerously close sexual relationship.

Homosexual activity is very common in RC seminaries and religious houses. The Vatican investigation of Seminaries in the United States (2006) directed the Visitators to assess, among other issues, homosexual presence and activity among faculty and students. The document invented a unique new pseudo-psychological term—**TRANSITIONAL HOMOSEXUALITY**. This is one way of admitting to ordination men who would otherwise be excluded from becoming priests because of their former behavior.

There are a number of myths about sexual orientation that need clarification.

Sexual orientation has a moderately flexible spectrum of identity including a broad range of understanding of masculinity and femininity and a permeable distinction and range when measured by behaviors—even to the extent of encompassing true bi-sexuality.

Because homosexuality is a minority orientation, people with this disposition suffer the confusion, misunderstanding, fear, attack, and prejudice accorded to every minority.

Most people who take advantage of women (including rape) are men who have a heterosexual orientation.

The bulk of pornography is directed toward men who have a heterosexual orientation. Many heterosexual men have several sexual partners. Some men are promiscuous. There is no proof that heterosexual men are superior moral beings over homosexual men. Men and women of all sexual stripes can and often do behave badly. That is not due to their orientation. That is due to choice.

The line between orientations is more vague and far more permeable than many people care to admit. (College students, prisoners, and military behaviors among others can bear witness.) In all of these instances, and more, we can clearly separate orientation from behavior.

I know of no scientific study that asserts that men (or women) who have a homosexual orientation are less responsible or more disordered in their behavior than heterosexual people. To have any rational discourse on sexuality—generally or specifically— the discussants must meet at the twain of orientation and behavior. That is basic.

In any evaluation of the potential for sexual abuse by Catholic priests and bishops the **clerical culture** of the RC Church and its **seminaries** must be remembered as a source of the development of sexual activity and deviation. The 2006 visitation-evaluation of US seminaries indicates that there are problems in these institutions. To date (November 2008) the results of that study have not been made public. On October 30, 2008 the Vatican issued new psychological screening guidelines for seminarians. The intention is to weed out candidates with “psychopathic disturbances.” The guidelines point out that

problems, including “**CONFUSED OR NOT YET WELL DEFINED**” sexual identities, need to be confronted.

The psychological problems manifested within the clerical culture are not new or unrecognized. In 1936 Father Thomas Verner Moore, a priest-psychiatrist, wrote about “*The Rate of Insanity in Priests and Religious*” and “*The Detection of Prepsychotics Who Apply for Admission to the Priesthood or Religious Communities*” in a popular church journal.²³ Most of the problems and potential sexual dangers are recorded in church documents in Code—easily understood within the system.

²³ *The Ecclesiastical Review*, vol 95 (1936) pp. 485-98 & 601-13