

But Judging Credibility in Abuse Cases Is a Tough Call

By Ann Rodgers-Melnick

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Bishop Anthony Bosco of Greensburg recalls shaking hands with parishioners after Mass years ago when a woman began shouting that one of his priests had abused her children.

Bosco asked her to call the diocesan official who handles such complaints. An inquiry revealed that the woman had no children, Bosco said.

That was the sort of allegation that diocesan officials deem “not credible.” But determining credibility can be much more difficult than that, bishops say. An accuser whose initial manner seems bizarre may be a true victim. The most agonizing cases pit a consistent story from a rational parishioner against a firm denial from a priest with an unimpeachable record.

Credibility was at issue when the dioceses of Greensburg and Pittsburgh recently reviewed the files of all living priests for old allegations.

The Greensburg search yielded vague allegations in the files of six priests that might have indicated sexual abuse of minors as long as 40 years ago. Two of the allegations have been deemed unfounded, two retired priests have been told they may no longer exercise public ministry and two priests remain under investigation, diocesan officials have said.

After the Pittsburgh review, Bishop Donald W. Wuerl announced that he had removed several priests from ministry because of credible but unsubstantiated accusations made against them in the past.

In announcing his decision, Wuerl said he was “raising the bar” of protection for parishioners. Previously, if a credible accusation was made against a priest but there was no other evidence of wrongdoing, the priest remained in ministry. Now, he would be removed. If an investigation clears any of the men, they can return to ministry, Wuerl said.

Wuerl's new standard is consistent with what some other bishops have done in the weeks since a long-festering molestation case in the Archdiocese of Boston made national headlines.

“I think many bishops are concerned that they don't know enough about cases and situations that they once took for granted as having been handled properly,” said Jason Berry, a Louisiana journalist who has been documenting child molestation by priests since 1985.

'It tars you for life'

William Kraft, a local psychologist who has treated victims and perpetrators of sexual abuse and who helped draft the Pittsburgh diocese's policy on sexual misconduct, said Wuerl's new standard “is probably wise.”

The risk, Kraft said, “is that some innocent priest may pay a price that is too high.”

Diocesan priests said they weren't too worried about the new policy. The Rev. Cornelius McCaulley, pastor of St. Stephen parish in Hazelwood, said Wuerl was already considered so strict about misconduct with minors that “I hadn't thought of it as being too much of a change.”

The Rev. Joseph Kleppner, pastor of St. Frances Cabrini in Aliquippa, said the priests he knew were most bothered by the restrictions that concerns about molestation had placed on them for years.

“When I was ordained 30 years ago, on a winter morning, if a kid's mother couldn't come pick him up after serving Mass, it was no problem to put the kid in my car and take him home. Not today,” Kleppner said.

He was glad that Wuerl had not released the names of the priests who were removed for unsubstantiated allegations.

“I don't care what your profession is -- doctor, teacher, priest or scout master -- once that accusation is made, you are guilty. It tars you for life,” Kleppner said.

During his 15-year tenure in Greensburg, Bosco said, noncredible accusations have been at least as common as credible ones.

Bosco said he did make an out-of-court settlement in one case that he did not consider credible. The accusation was based on memories that the accuser claimed to have recovered years later. Although he believed the diocese would win in court, he followed legal advice to settle because it would cost less than a trial, he said. That priest remained in ministry.

Bosco said he also settled a case that he considered credible, and the priest was permanently removed from ministry.

Wuerl has made settlements in three cases, in all of which he believed the priests were guilty, said the Rev. Ronald Lengwin, spokesman for the diocese. All were cases that were highly publicized, he said.

“This was not an effort to make a settlement secretly in order to keep it from becoming public,” he said.

In all of the settlements, however, both parties agreed not to reveal the amount of the settlement, and some had additional restrictions on what could be publicly divulged about the facts of the case, Lengwin said.

Going to the police

The written policy in the Diocese of Pittsburgh is to encourage anyone who makes a complaint to take it to the civil authorities. The diocese says it will report any allegation that is made by a

minor. If the allegation is made by an adult, the diocese reserves the right to report it to the authorities, but may opt to respect the wish of the victim or victim's family not to have it made public through the legal system.

Lengwin said there was one case in which the diocese went to the police over the objections of the family. He would not identify the case, but the only one on record in which the diocese made the first report to the police was that of Edward Huff, a former priest who in 1995 pleaded guilty to attempted indecent assault and corruption of minors.

Kraft, who helped draft the Pittsburgh policy, said he had argued unsuccessfully to require accusers to file complaints with the police. He believed it would help protect priests from false allegations.

“It's also good for the victims,” he said.

Berry, who has long called for the church to be more open about abuse cases, said it was not necessarily wrong for a settlement to be made quietly if the priest was also removed from ministry.

“There is a difference between legitimate secrecy and immoral secrecy,” he said. “There are many victims who ... do not want to be identified, who simply want financial redress to put their lives back together. I don't blame those people.”

Berry believes that one glaring false allegation in 1993 had a chilling effect on what were then growing efforts to end the cover-up of sexual abuse in Catholic dioceses. When former seminarian Steven Cook filed a \$10 million molestation lawsuit against the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, who was then archbishop of Chicago, the national media gave the story tremendous publicity.

Cook then recanted and apologized to Bernardin. He said his accusations were due to “unreliable” memories recovered under hypnosis, and that he had been influenced by some ultraconservative Catholics who wanted to rid the church of Bernardin.

After the major media were stung so badly, “the survivor movement was halted in its tracks. It became very difficult for a number of years for people who were struggling to get the church to change to get the attention of the media. And I think the bishops took the position that the storm was over,” Berry said.

Discerning the truth

One obstacle to judging credibility is that there are rarely obvious signs that a priest is sexually attracted to minors, Bosco said. He worked in the same office for years with the Rev. Robert Wolk, who later became notorious for his abuse of two altar boys, but had no inkling of Wolk's proclivity, Bosco said. Wolk would talk about the family whose charges eventually sent him to prison for 10 years, but he spoke of the whole family, not just the children.

Wuerl recalled a case that he did not initially consider credible, but which was later substantiated. In 1988, when a former seminarian said the Rev. Anthony Cipolla had molested him throughout his teen-age years, Wuerl said openly that the accuser had a history of making false allegations against other seminarians.

But the accuser's attorney unearthed a 1978 detective's report from a case that the mother later dropped in which a 9-year-old boy gave a detailed account of Cipolla molesting him. Although Cipolla had denied the molestation, he had told police that the naked 9-year-old had been alone with him in his bedroom for a medical examination.

In 1993, when the Vatican's highest court ordered Wuerl to return Cipolla to ministry, Wuerl refused to do so. Eventually, the Vatican confirmed Wuerl's order banning Cipolla from ministry. Cipolla was never criminally prosecuted and maintains his innocence.

“The hardest thing to do is to make a decision where it is one person's word against another, with nothing to corroborate it,” Wuerl said. “In [the Cipolla] case, where there might have been some question about the credibility of one person, the credibility of other people, when they began to speak, was a little more substantiated. And then there was some corroborating and supporting material.”

Kraft, who has conducted workshops on sexual abuse in other dioceses, said he considered Pittsburgh's policy one of the better ones. Although he works primarily with victims, he has counseled former priests after they completed institutional treatment for sexual attraction to minors.

Wuerl has been more adamant about not returning offenders to ministry than he himself might have been in some cases, Kraft said.

Since 1988, it has been Wuerl's stated practice not to allow any priest who has molested a minor to return to ministry, even if he is believed to have successfully completed treatment. Although his written policy could allow such a priest to have a highly supervised nonparish ministry if everyone else in that ministry agreed to it, that option has not been used.

“Wuerl was clearly ahead of the curve,” said the Rev. Thomas Reese, a Jesuit priest who is an expert on the U.S. hierarchy.

<http://old.post-gazette.com/nation/20020317priests4.asp>

Wuerl has dealt with red ink, downsizing, sex abuse

By Ann Rodgers-Melnick

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In 15 years at the helm of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, Bishop Donald Wuerl's hair has paled from steel gray to silver and his face has been etched by crises that began even before his March 25, 1988, installation ceremony.

He has vanquished a multimillion-dollar deficit, saved inner-city Catholic schools by creating a foundation to support them, and presided over a traumatic reorganization that closed many churches but left the diocese with 215 active parishes for 812,000 parishioners.

He emerged from last year's Catholic sexual abuse scandals as a poster bishop for zero tolerance, hailed as a role model for his 1993 refusal to obey a Vatican order to reinstate an accused pedophile priest who had never been convicted of a crime, but who Wuerl believed was guilty.

Now 62, he laughs off rumors of transfer to Philadelphia or Boston. He will celebrate an anniversary Mass at 8 a.m. Tuesday in St. Paul Cathedral, Oakland. In a recent interview, the Mount Washington native reflected on what he has learned as bishop.

The most important lesson has been on the necessity of tending his own soul. He recently sought out the priest who was his spiritual director 40 years ago at the Catholic University of America. And the old priest's advice hadn't changed.

"His point was -- and it's a thing that I know needs to be done -- you must find time, quiet time and prayer time every day," Wuerl said. "I think the one thing, going into the future, that I have learned from the past is you need to make that time. You can't live without it."

The best part of being a bishop, he said, is the opportunity to help people focus on the meaning of life. That's why, when a disaster such as the 1994 USAirways crash strikes the community, he drops everything else to address it.

"If there is something of grave concern to the community and you don't bring the spiritual dimension to it, the community is impoverished. We just don't live by bread alone. Our people know that -- and when I say our people I mean all the people of this community, Protestant, Jewish, Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim," he said.

His most painful problems were not the public crises.

"The most difficult thing I have had to deal with as bishop is when a priest comes to me and says, 'I'm thinking of leaving the ministry,'" Wuerl said.

These are not priests he removed for wrongdoing, but included some very good men.

“You feel so inadequate. I feel there must be something I can say or do that would call that person back to that first fervor of priesthood,” he said.

Sometimes he has succeeded.

“And that is what makes the ones that don’t turn out so sad. Only after you have ... anticipated ordination and longed for it and experienced the joy of it can you realize how powerful that is. I think it’s akin to someone falling in love and getting married.”

‘You offer to be present’

Wuerl, who spent just six months as a parish priest after his 1966 ordination, said bishops and parish priests have different roles, but must share one key characteristic.

“You have to love your people,” he said.

“I’m not talking about gooshy, affective, warm and cuddly. I’m talking about the love you see in parents for their children. The love that true friendship has. Wanting the good for other people, being prepared to make sacrifices for them and being prepared even to say strong things to them to help them understand what it is you are talking about.”

Tough love was necessary almost immediately in 1988, when he first decided he would not return a priest who had ever sexually abused a minor to ministry.

During the 1970s the now-late Bishop Vincent Leonard had transferred offenders to other parishes. In the 1980s then-Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua sometimes put them in nonparish ministries on the recommendation of treatment centers. Wuerl’s policy was shaped not by attorneys and canonists, he said, but by asking the Holy Spirit to show him how a bishop should act.

When he became bishop of Pittsburgh Wuerl learned that three priests were on administrative leave for having molested the same two altar boys. Later that year the boys’ parents decided to press charges and sue the diocese. (The diocese settled out of court, and two of the priests went to prison).

But early on, his attorneys warned Wuerl not to speak with the family. Instead, after asking their pastor if they would like to hear from him, he called their home. The mother invited him to dinner.

“I said [to myself] these are good people, these are good people. They’ve been wronged. There is nobody else in the church who can right that wrong. And I represent the church,” Wuerl said.

“I had been a priest long enough to say, what else do I bring to this if I don’t go and see them? ... Isn’t that what a priest does in any situation? You offer to be present. ... You are not going there as a spokesperson, you are not going there as legal counsel, you are not going there as canonical counsel. You are going there as their priest.”

Lost 113,000 Catholics

The Post-Gazette later interviewed several people who were either at that dinner or who saw Wuerl in the office the next day. By all accounts he was morally outraged by the emotional and spiritual damage the priests had done to the boys and everyone who loved them. Shortly afterward he informed his priests that child molesters would not be returned to ministry.

After listening to the victims, “You can’t help but ... say, ‘This is not going to happen again on my watch. I don’t know how, but we are going to take all the steps to see that it doesn’t happen again. And you do the best you can,’ “ he said.

By all evidence, he has stuck to that decision. The one pending child molestation suit was filed in 2000 and concerns 20-year-old complaints against Jack Hoehl, who Wuerl banned from ministry in 1988 based on someone else’s allegations.

Bishop Donald Wuerl meets with diocese staff members. From left are Susan Rauscher, secretary for pastoral and social life, Sister Margaret Hannan, associate general secretary, and Bishop David Zubik, general secretary and auxiliary bishop.

In at least three cases involving molestation, fraud or embezzlement by priests, diocesan officials called the police and faced the headlines. It is now diocesan policy to report all child abuse allegations to the police, no matter how old.

“I think we learned very, very early on that you can’t hide something like this,” Wuerl said.

Ironically, a case that he hoped would remain quiet was his fight with the Vatican to keep Anthony Cipolla out of ministry. Wuerl, who had worked at the Vatican for 10 years, did not want to paint Rome as a villain or look like a rebel. News about the case came from Cipolla’s supporters, who still view Wuerl as a tyrant persecuting an innocent man. But that case -- and its unwanted publicity -- was his salvation at a time when the media implied that all bishops tolerated pedophiles.

“I never thought I would have looked back on the Father Cipolla case and seen all of that as a blessing, but it turned out to be one in disguise -- very well disguised. It turned out to be a blessing, because we implemented policy and saw to it that, if something like that happened again, the person could not be back in church,” Wuerl said.

If he is now best known outside the diocese for zero tolerance on child molesters, he may be best remembered within it for the diocesan reorganization. With the collapse of the steel industry, between 1978 and 1988 the diocese lost 113,000 Catholics, the equivalent of 26 large parishes. After officiating at his first two funerals for priests, Wuerl realized he could no longer supply many of the small, often ethnic parishes clustered within blocks of each other.

After three years of grass-roots planning involving 10,000 parishioners, between 1992 and 1994 he dissolved 163 of 333 parishes and missions. He closed 39 churches outright and created 56 new ones, merged parishes that each initially used two or more of the old church buildings for Mass. Some Catholics vented their anger in 14 lawsuits and several appeals to the Vatican that went nowhere. Although some mergers were difficult, most parishioners have adapted.

The lesson he learned was on the importance of explaining, over and over to anyone who will listen, what he is doing and why.

“I have often said that, instead of the motto ‘Thy kingdom come’ on my coat of arms, it should really be ‘You can never communicate too much,’ “ he said.

But money was the first crisis Wuerl confronted. He inherited a \$2.6 million deficit that was projected to rise to \$3.8 million within a year. He immediately appointed an advisory panel of lay financial experts and cut \$1 million from his operating budget -- without laying off any employees. He also gathered all of the priests -- many of whom believed the diocese had hidden funds -- to lay out the grim financial picture in detail.

The diocese finished the 1990 fiscal year in the black and has not run a deficit since. Last year, despite the national sexual abuse scandal and a bad economy, giving to the Diocese of Pittsburgh rose slightly.

“The reason we have never gone back to the red is I think we have all been so traumatized by the thought of what we started with,” Wuerl said. “You have to demonstrate to the faithful people and the wider community that you are absolutely responsible.”“

After 15 years, Wuerl believes there are many things he could have done better in hindsight.

“On the other hand, would I want to go back and undo things? No, no.”

<http://old.post-gazette.com/localnews/20030323wuerlreg3p3.asp>

Possible Law successor decries secrecy

By Michael Paulson

The Boston Globe

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NEW HAVEN -- Bishop Donald W. Wuerl of Pittsburgh, widely considered a strong candidate to be the next archbishop of Boston, said yesterday the clergy sex abuse scandal was largely caused by the culture of secrecy within the church and he advocates greater openness, not fundamental change, as the solution to the crisis.

Speaking to a conference at Yale University, Wuerl acknowledged that his own future is the subject of much discussion. Many church-watchers and clergy contend the 62-year-old Pittsburgh native will be the next archbishop of Boston or Philadelphia because of his training in Rome, relationship with the pope, doctrinal conservatism, pastoral skills, and strong record on ousting sexually abusive priests.

“I would be quite happy with remaining right where I am, and not having to contemplate that that wouldn’t be the right order of things,” he told an audience gathered for a conference on “Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Church.”

Asked later what he meant, Wuerl declined to talk further about his future, saying “it’s all speculation.”

In a 60-minute address at Saint Thomas More Catholic Chapel and Center in New Haven, Wuerl made it quite clear that he does not see structural change as the solution to the church crisis. He referred to the church as “a divinely established reality” and said “the hierarchy and the apostolic tradition are intrinsic to the church.” He spoke derisively of an unspecified Protestant denomination he said allowed congregations to vote on whether or not to accept Jesus, and contended that it would be a mistake to attempt to shape the church in the image of political institutions. He warned against allowing the news media or interest groups to shape the church.

“While stockholders in a corporation may have the ultimate authority over the structure of the corporation itself, and while in a democracy sovereignty rests with the majority . . . neither of these models serves when we address the nature and function of the church,” Wuerl said. “We must be careful not to use a political model for a reality that transcends political institutions.”

In the church, he said, “we do not vote or take a head count to determine what we should believe or how the church should be structured.”

What does need to change, Wuerl argued, is the secrecy that has cloaked many church decisions. “The answer is openness,” he said, “sharing information . . . and accepting the critique of others.”

He called for the greater involvement of laypeople. Wuerl said the church should look to the consultative bodies already in place, such as finance and pastoral councils, to involve laypeople in a role that he described as “consultative” and “advisory.”

Wuerl, who said he consulted with 10,000 laypeople who served on various committees before closing a number of churches in Pittsburgh, said “much of the origin of the recent scandal . . . is rooted in the secrecy and confidentiality surrounding not only the sexual crime itself, but the lack of information involved in transferring priests to an assignment.”

Several times Wuerl warned against the role of the news media and interest groups in shaping the church.

“We’ve all learned that in the collaborative process, information sharing, consultation, consensus building, can all be rendered meaningless if we give in to pressure groups, whether media driven or driven by any other purpose,” he said at one point. He also declared that “appeals to media or special-interest groups to bring pressure are really inappropriate for a faith community.”

The most distinguishing item on Wuerl’s resume, given the crisis that has riven the Boston Archdiocese and the American Catholic Church, is that he fought and won a lengthy battle with the Vatican over his decision to oust an allegedly abusive priest popular among the church’s conservative wing.

That confrontation began in 1993, when the Vatican’s highest court ordered Wuerl to reinstate the Rev. Anthony Cipolla, whom Wuerl had removed after the priest was accused of molesting a teenage boy. The Vatican court, in a decision obtained by the Pittsburgh Post Gazette, declared that the Saint Luke Institute, where Wuerl had sent Cipolla for evaluation, was “founded by a priest who is openly homosexual and based on a mixed doctrine of Freudian pansexualism and behaviorism, [and] is surely not a suitable institution apt to judge rightly about the beliefs and the lifestyle of a Catholic priest.”

Wuerl challenged the Vatican court, and two years later, it reversed itself. And Wuerl has removed abusive priests from the ministry, a practice he began nearly 15 years before the US Conference of Catholic Bishops made such a step mandatory.

Several things make him a likely candidate for archbishop in Boston. He has served as a bishop in two dioceses, Seattle and Pittsburgh. He is old enough, 62, to be seasoned, but young enough that he could make a significant mark before he is required to retire at age 75.

He has also studied and worked in Rome -- often an important criterion for successful bishops. He is reportedly close to Pope John Paul II.

“Bishop Wuerl is certainly a possibility if he is not being groomed for Philadelphia,” said Chester Gillis, chairman of the theology department at Georgetown University. “He is known to the Vatican, very loyal to the Holy See, and an experienced administrator.”

Wuerl has a nationally syndicated television program, “The Teaching of Christ”; has published numerous books, including an adult catechism; and is a professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, his hometown.

Boston has been without an archbishop since Dec. 13, when Cardinal Bernard F. Law resigned over criticism of his failure to remove sexually abusive priests from the ministry. Bishop Richard G. Lennon is serving as interim administrator of the archdiocese, and Pope John Paul II has given no indication of when he intends to name a new archbishop.

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http://archive.boston.com/globe/spotlight/abuse/stories4/032903_wuerl.htm

Wuerl's tough record on sex abuse spurs speculation of move to Boston

By Ann Rodgers-Melnick

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Catholic Bishop Donald W. Wuerl's wake-up call to the problem of child sexual abuse by clergy came a few years before he became head of the Pittsburgh diocese.

He remembers reading about a Louisiana bishop who had knowingly transferred a serial child rapist from parish to parish to parish.

"When you read something like that, you say, 'Isn't that terrible? But that's not happening here,'" Wuerl recalled.

But shortly after becoming bishop of Pittsburgh in February 1988, he learned that it had happened here. Several months earlier, three priests had been banned from public ministry because of allegations that they had all molested the same two altar boys.

And a fourth priest, the former principal of two diocesan high schools, had been given an administrative job in the diocesan education office because of a 1986 allegation that he had molested a student at Quigley High School in Baden.

That reckoning set the course for his evolution into a bishop who now has a national reputation for zero tolerance of priests who molest minors.

That stature has put him at the center of speculation that he is a prime candidate to replace Cardinal Bernard Law, whose failure to remove known child molesters from priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of Boston exploded into a scandal that rocked the Catholic Church.

"If you're looking for a bishop who is going to oust these priests, he is the man for you," said Tim Bendig, 34, whose 1988 civil lawsuit led to Wuerl's fight in the Vatican for the right to remove predators.

Meeting the victims

The three priests who'd been banned from public ministry just as Wuerl became bishop were the Revs. Robert Wolk, Richard Zula and Francis Pucci. The former high school principal still serving as a diocesan administrator was the Rev. John Hoehl.

In July 1988, after a psychiatric treatment center in Toronto said Hoehl was fit to begin at least limited ministry, Wuerl made him chaplain at Shadyside Hospital, according to the Rev. Ronald Lengwin, spokesman for the diocese.

Then, two months later, Wuerl met his first victims.

The parents of the boys in the Wolk case, who earlier had not wanted to go public, decided to tell the police and sue the diocese.

“They really just wanted to make sure that this was never going to happen again to anyone else,” said the Rev. John Arnott, who was then their pastor at a small parish in Washington County. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette does not identify victims of sexual abuse without their permission.

Arnott had not known of the abuse by the two other pastors. Now the family told him of their planned action. Arnott knew them to be Catholics of great faith. Unsure of what Wuerl knew, Arnott called him.

Wuerl asked Arnott to try to arrange a meeting with the family. They invited Wuerl to dinner. Wuerl attended against the advice of his attorneys and advisers, according to Lengwin and others who worked in the chancery at the time.

He would later speak of his outrage at the spiritual damage the priests had wrought on the family. That dinner set the tone for future cases, said Nicholas Cafardi, a canon and civil lawyer then on the bishop’s staff and now on the U.S. bishops’ national lay review board on child sexual abuse.

Wuerl told his staff that his first concern was for the injured party and his second for that person’s family.

“Only third would we worry about the potential harm to the church and its reputation. Not every bishop took that position,” Cafardi said.

Wolk and Zula went to prison; Wolk was voluntarily laicized and Zula remains banned from ministry. Pucci’s charges were dropped due to the statute of limitations. He was forced to retire. Until his death last year, he was allowed to say Mass only for the nuns in the convent where he stayed, Lengwin said.

The diocese settled the Wolk suit out of court.

It is one of three such settlements that Lengwin says the diocese has made during Wuerl’s tenure. All three -- those of Anthony Cipolla and Richard Dorsch were the others -- were legally actionable under the statute of limitations, Lengwin said.

The claim appears borne out by complaints to the Post-Gazette from others who went to the diocese decades after childhood abuse. Although Wuerl ousted the priest, they said, the diocese offered only financial compensation for counseling and related expenses such as parking and baby-sitting.

One man is currently known to be suing the diocese over childhood sexual abuse, and his suit was filed 12 years after Wuerl ousted the priest named in the case on the basis of someone else’s complaint.

Ahead of the curve

The Wolk case made headlines in mid-October 1988, and by month’s end, suits were filed against two more priests. One against the Rev. James Somma, then at Nativity Church in South

Park, came from a woman who had been a childhood friend of Somma's adopted daughter 25 years earlier. It was judged "not credible" by the diocese and later dismissed by the court due to the statute of limitations. Somma, who died last year, remained in ministry.

The second suit marked the last time Wuerl publicly questioned the credibility of an accuser. When Tim Bendig, then 19, alleged that Cipolla had molested him from the time he was 12 until he turned 18, Wuerl responded that Bendig had made unfounded allegations during his brief tenure as a seminarian in 1987.

Nonetheless, Wuerl sent Cipolla for psychiatric evaluation. According to documents that later emerged from Wuerl's battle to ban Cipolla from ministry, the psychiatrists recommended long-term hospitalization. When Cipolla refused Wuerl's order to undergo such treatment, Wuerl banned him from all public ministry. Bendig's attorney would later present Wuerl with documents detailing Cipolla's 1978 arrest for molesting a 9-year-old boy.

But Cipolla, who maintains his innocence, appealed to the Vatican. When the first court ruled in Wuerl's favor, Cipolla appealed to the Vatican's highest court, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura.

In November 1988, not long after the Cipolla and Somma suits were filed, Wuerl removed Hoehl from the hospital chaplaincy post he'd just appointed him to and banned him from presenting himself as a priest. Hoehl then resigned from priesthood.

The decision to oust Hoehl was another step on the path to zero tolerance, 14 years before it became national policy, Lengwin said.

"Our whole thinking has evolved over the years and was maybe a little bit ahead of the church," he said.

But the church did not announce why Hoehl was gone, and no court case brought it to media attention. Around 1992, there would be two cases that the Post-Gazette later learned about, in which a priest was quietly but permanently removed from ministry after allegations of sexual abuse of minors. The Post-Gazette is not identifying them because there were no criminal or civil charges.

A battle with the Vatican

In 1993, two other cases collided, testing Wuerl's resolve.

In February 1992, two families from two parishes complained within two days about the Rev. Edward Huff. One said he had rubbed a boy's leg while he drove the child to a pizza shop, Lengwin said. The other was worse, Lengwin said, but he declined to describe it.

"It was enough to remove him [from his parish] that same day," Lengwin said.

Huff spent 10 months in a psychiatric facility for priests, which gave him an optimistic prognosis, Lengwin said. But just as Huff was released, Wuerl heard informally that Cipolla's appeal for reinstatement had gone well, Lengwin said. The accusations in the suit pending against Cipolla were worse than those against Huff. If the Signatura were to order Cipolla back to ministry, what chance would Wuerl have of ousting Huff?

"There is no question that the Vatican decision was influencing our thinking," Lengwin said.

On Nov. 2, 1992, Wuerl made Huff a hospital chaplain and assigned him to the same rectory as Lengwin, who was expected to monitor him, Lengwin said. That lasted two months. Then several families from yet another of Huff's former parishes, in Bessemer, Lawrence County, told the diocese that Huff had molested their young teenage sons. Huff was sent back to the psychiatric facility and resigned from the priesthood seven weeks later.

According to the police, the diocese took those complaints to the district attorney. Huff pleaded guilty to indecent assault and corruption of minors and was sentenced to up to five years in jail.

Wuerl never put another offender in nonparish ministry, despite the continued advice of psychiatric experts, Lengwin said.

"I don't know if I would characterize it as being burned [by that experience], but we determined it was not something that we wanted to do again," Lengwin said.

On March 8, 1993, three weeks after Huff resigned from ministry, Wuerl gave his priests the newly published diocesan policy on sexual misconduct. Because the Vatican could order an offender returned to ministry, it spelled out strict criteria for such a case. The priest would have to be repentant, involved in ongoing therapy, work in a place where everyone knew his history and where he could be monitored at all times. Wuerl said he never used that option.

The day after the policy was handed out, the Vatican's highest court ordered Wuerl to reinstate Cipolla. Wuerl then filed an almost unheard-of appeal. Two-and-a-half years later, he won that appeal, which led to revisions in the way the Vatican courts handle such cases.

But it may have caused Wuerl political damage in Rome. Cardinal Zenon Grocholewski, who signed the decree ordering Cipolla reinstated, has a vote in the Vatican congregation that makes and moves bishops.

"It's unprecedented that a bishop would fight so hard, not for just one victim, but for all victims," said Bendig, Cipolla's accuser. "He risked his reputation to have [Cipolla] removed."

Recent cases

The last arrest of a Pittsburgh priest for molesting a minor occurred Aug. 26, 1994. The Rev. Richard Dorsch, a much-admired pastor who served on the diocesan priest council, was charged with molesting a 13-year-old boy during a sports outing at North Park. Wuerl immediately banned Dorsch from any pretense of ministry

According to Lengwin, Wuerl contacted the victim's family and the diocese reached a financial settlement. Dorsch was convicted of indecent assault and sentenced to up to 23 months in jail. He resigned from the priesthood in April 1996.

The boy's father no longer wants to talk about it. "I just want it to go away," he said.

In the one suit that is still pending, Paul J. Dorsch, no relation to Richard Dorsch, sued Hoehl and the diocese in 2001. Hoehl had been forced out of the priesthood 12 years earlier, but Dorsch said his own life had been a living hell since 1976. During high school at Quigley, Dorsch said, he was among other boys who received special privileges in exchange for allowing Hoehl to molest them. Dorsch blames the abuse for serious medical problems, his divorce and his loss of faith.

Although Hoehl had been gone since 1988, the diocese had heard from a second accuser in 1993 and a fourth came forward after Dorsch in 2002.

"Do we believe the allegations are credible? Yes," Lengwin said.

Paul Dorsch formally contacted the diocese in 1997 because he wanted a public warning that Hoehl was a child molester.

"I wasn't asking for money. I was looking for an educational way to resolve the issue of accountability, so that he couldn't do this to other kids. I wanted for all of those priests who were removed from the diocese to be exposed," Dorsch said.

He did not get what he wanted.

"They said he was no longer their employee and that they had no responsibility for him and can't do anything," Dorsch said.

Lengwin said that even if it were possible to keep track of former priests, the diocese can determine only whether someone was suitable for ministry. It requires a court to declare that someone has committed a crime, he said.

Attorneys for the diocese argue that church officials acted responsibly. Most of the legal wrangling concerns whether the abuse aggravated Dorsch's debilitating Crohn's disease and whether he made the connection between the abuse and the disease recently enough to avoid the statute of limitations. Because no attorney would take Dorsch's case on contingency, his legal fees now top \$30,000.

Dorsch believes the diocese has a moral obligation to settle.

"I think they are hiding behind the statute of limitations for monetary reasons," he said.

An unknown number of ousters occurred last year as the Boston and other scandals unfolded.

In March 2002, Wuerl announced that, after reviewing old personnel files, he had removed “several” priests. The diocese had changed its policy on what to do if a case boiled down to the word of a credible accuser against that of a credible priest with a clean record. Previously such priests stayed in some kind of ministry.

Wuerl now says he would choose to err on the side of accusers.

But because he did not know if these priests were innocent or guilty, he would not release their names. A comparison of diocesan directories and other evidence suggests that “several” meant about a half-dozen.

The Post-Gazette is aware of at least two other cases last year in which accusers came forward with allegations for the first time and priests were permanently removed from ministry. Perhaps the only thing that Paul Dorsch and Bendig agree on about Wuerl is that he should release the names of all priests removed due to accusations of child sexual abuse.

The last known major act in Wuerl’s response to sexual abuse cases came last fall, when at Wuerl’s insistence, Pope John Paul II forcibly laicized Cipolla.

“Our bottom line is that we can assure people that there is no priest in ministry who has abused a child,” Lengwin said.

<http://old.post-gazette.com/localnews/20030615wuerl0615p2.asp>

Diocesan cover-up alleged in sex abuse cases

By Ann Rodgers

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

July 1, 2004

Six new complaints have been filed against the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, alleging that it covered up child sexual abuse accusations against five priests, one of whom was a prominent pastor in Mt. Lebanon.

The Rev. George Wilt, 72, who retired in May 2003 after 35 years at St. Bernard parish, is accused of sexually abusing a 13-year-old girl whom he was supposed to be counseling. The Rev. Ronald Lengwin, spokesman for the diocese, said he would have no comment about Wilt until diocesan officials had seen the complaint. A call to Wilt's residence was not returned.

No year is given for the alleged abuse in any of the complaints filed yesterday by attorneys Richard Serbin of Altoona and Alan Perer of Pittsburgh. However, their news release said that all of the cases were too old for the statute of limitations, which for most offenses committed prior to August 2002 is the victim's 20th birthday.

For that reason, Serbin and Perer are not suing the accused molesters but the diocese, Bishop Donald Wuerl and former Pittsburgh bishop, Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua. They claim that their clients only discovered within the past two years that the bishops had conspired to cover up child sexual abuse. Since January, Serbin and Perer have filed 25 complaints involving 14 priests and former priests.

These lawsuits offer no evidence that diocesan leaders failed to respond to abuse allegations, said a statement Lengwin released last night.

Some claims were impossible to investigate because the priests had died and others were never brought to the diocese. But when accusations were brought against men still in the priesthood, they were permanently removed from ministry, it said.

"The Diocese of Pittsburgh strongly affirms that under the leadership of Bishop Wuerl, there has been no conspiracy to knowingly shuffle around from parish to parish priests accused of sexual misconduct with minors, nor has there been any conspiracy to hide those priests accused," the statement said.

Three of the five named yesterday were named previously. The new names were Wilt and the Rev. Edward Smith, who diocesan officials say was a Holy Spirit Father who died in 1957.

Smith is accused of sexually abusing a 16-year-old girl. Although Smith served at Sacred Heart parish in Emsworth, the diocese keeps no personnel records on religious order priests and refers complaints to their religious superiors, Lengwin said. Attempts to reach the superior of the Holy Spirit Fathers yesterday were unsuccessful.

The others named were:

The former Rev. John Hoehl, who was headmaster of Quigley Catholic High School in Baden from 1971 to 1985, resigned from the priesthood after Wuerl banned him from ministry in 1988 due to sexual abuse allegations. This complaint accuses him of sexually abusing a 14-year-old boy at Quigley. Hoehl has been named by six other clients of Serbin and Perer, and in an unrelated suit filed in 2001.

The Rev. Lawrence O'Connell, is accused of abusing two female students at St. Gabriel School in Whitehall, one of whom was 7 years old when the abuse began. According to Lengwin, O'Connell died in 1986, and the diocese had never received a child sexual abuse allegation against him until Serbin filed a complaint in April on behalf of a different accuser. The Rev. Andrew Suran is accused of sexually abusing a 6-year-old girl at St. Michael parish in Braddock. According to Lengwin, Suran died in 1971 and a complaint Serbin filed in April was also the first child sexual abuse allegation it had heard against him.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/frontpage/2004/07/01/Diocesan-cover-up-alleged-in-sex-abuse-cases/stories/200407010188>

Pope Names New Archbishop for Washington

By John O'Neil

The New York Times

May 16, 2006

Bishop Donald W. Wuerl of Pittsburgh was named by Pope Benedict XVI today as the new archbishop of Washington, succeeding Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick.

Bishop Wuerl, 65, has served as Pittsburgh's bishop since 1988, and is considered one of the more prominent of the nation's conservative bishops. His first appointment after being ordained a bishop in 1986 was in an unusual power-sharing arrangement in Seattle, where he was sent as assistant bishop by Pope John Paul II while Archbishop Raymond G. Hunthausen was under investigation by the Vatican for unorthodox views.

Cardinal McCarrick, who was regarded as more moderate on many issues, praised Bishop Wuerl as "one of the great churchmen of the United States." He spoke of his prayers that the Pope would pick a great bishop to take his place, saying, "He has done that, in spades."

Cardinal McCarrick, who had led the archdiocese since 2001, submitted his resignation to the Vatican last July when he turned 75, as church policy requires. It had been refused by the Pope, and a spokesman for the Cardinal said last fall that it was expected that he would serve for another two years.

At a press conference in Washington today, Bishop Wuerl said that the appointment was being made now because the Pope had agreed to Cardinal McCarrick's request that he be allowed to retire now.

Cardinal McCarrick had hinted that a change would be coming soon in an interview with The Washington Post last month. In the interview, the Cardinal listed ideal traits for a successor, including that he "not be afraid of the media."

While the archdiocese of Washington is not a large one — it serves 560,000 Catholics compared with some 800,000 in the diocese of Pittsburgh, according to their respective websites — it has traditionally been a high-profile position, due to its location at the heart of government, and its leader has traditionally been elevated to the rank of cardinal.

Bishop Wuerl showed himself at home with media attention during the televised press conference, sidestepping several questions and bantering that reporters should direct all hard questions to the Cardinal.

Asked how he would deal with Catholic politicians who support abortion rights while personally opposing abortion, he responded, "I think that the first task of a bishop is to teach."

A growing number of Catholic bishops contend that the church should deny communion to Catholic politicians who take positions contradicting church teachings. Cardinal McCarrick was the most prominent bishop to oppose that approach.

Asked about immigration, Bishop Wuerl did not take as hard a line as several other bishops, who have denounced the bill passed by the House of Representatives, which would make it a crime to offer assistance of any kind to illegal aliens. Instead, he stressed that “the dignity of each person, the worth of each person, the human needs of people” should be a part of discussion on the issue.

And asked about the movie version of “The Da Vinci Code,” a thriller that has been denounced by some conservative Catholics, Bishop Wuerl said he was “not in the business” of telling people what entertainment was right or wrong for them.

Instead, he urged people thinking of going to see it to “go back and check the real sources, and be informed.”

Bishop Wuerl was born in Pittsburgh and educated at Catholic University in Washington and the Gregorian University and the University of St. Thomas in Rome. He was ordained a priest in 1966.

He is the host of a television program, “The Teaching of Christ,” which is broadcast on CBS, the Christian Association cable channel and through national syndication, according to his official biography on the Diocese of Pittsburgh web site. It said that his catechism of the same name has been in print for 30 years. Bishop Wuerl's most recent book, “The Catholic Way,” was published in 2001.

In 2003, he was mentioned as a possible successor to Cardinal Law Bernard Law of Boston, who was forced to resign in the face of widespread anger among parishioners over his handling of sexual abuse cases involving priests. At the time, The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette wrote that Bishop Wuerl has “been roundly praised for his prudent handling of sexual abuse allegations within the Pittsburgh Diocese.”

Cardinal McCarrick said today that he would remain in Washington doing the work of the church, and would spend more time with his family in New Jersey. He served as archbishop of Newark from 1986 to 2000.

A blog that follows Catholic church politics, Whispers in the Loggia, wrote recently that Cardinal McCarrick was pushing to hasten his retirement because he “is eager to continue his international work on behalf of the Holy See and other church entities.”

But Cardinal McCarrick also has spoken of his desire to shift to a slower pace and spend more time fishing at the Jersey Shore.

“Most people my age are dead,” he told The Star Ledger last year.

Today he said that one of the things he wanted to spend time doing was “preparing for coming home.”

“I'll be spending a lot of time in prayer,” he said.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/16/us/16cnd-bishop.html>

High-Profile Pulpit Getting a Quiet Leader

By Michelle Boorstein

The Washington Post

May 21, 2006

PITTSBURGH -- From his office window, Roman Catholic Bishop Donald W. Wuerl can see the church in which he was raised.

St. Mary of the Mount sits on a dramatic, verdant bluff overlooking the city, a place where Wuerl knows how to get things done, where he knows the people, where he is warmly called a “real Pittsburgher” -- someone who doesn’t like to make a big fuss about himself.

In his 18 years as bishop here, Wuerl’s preference to work behind the scenes has enamored him to the people of this heavily Catholic region, allowing Wuerl, for example, to close with relative peace nearly a third of the diocese’s 320 parishes as shuttered steel mills killed jobs and neighborhoods. He doesn’t seek public attention, whether he’s washing prisoners’ feet or discussing immigration reform.

As Wuerl, 65, prepares to be installed next month as archbishop of Washington, however, people here say they can’t predict how his quiet, formal style will play in a high-profile pulpit where controversial global issues are part of the daily fare.

“Bishop Wuerl is not the kind of person who bursts on the scene and wows people. It’s drip by drip by drip, but over time he’s a reservoir,” said Fred Thieman, a Pittsburgh lawyer and former federal prosecutor who has worked with Wuerl on issues including clergy sex abuse, church finance and gang violence. “He is politically savvy, but he is not a political creature. It’s hard to say how that will look.”

Called “the teaching bishop” in this diocese, Wuerl is a slight man -- a Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorial Friday described him as “meek and mild” -- who speaks loudly as an educator. He has compiled a best-selling book of Catholic teachings, now in its sixth edition, and is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ committee on catechesis, or teachings.

His nature is to be “cautious and conservative,” said the Rev. Robert J. Silva, president of the National Federation of Priests’ Councils. Wuerl, whose appointment as archbishop of Washington was announced last week, will look to the Vatican and the bishops’ conference on shaping his role in the nation’s capital, Silva predicted.

The times Wuerl has chosen to speak out are unusual, and people here remember them. There was his call for handgun limits after a spate of shootings in 2000 -- a sensitive topic in a region where many schools close for the first day of deer hunting season. In 2004, he was one of the first U.S. bishops to say he did not support denying Communion to Catholic politicians who favored abortion rights, such as Sen. John F. Kerry (D-Mass.), then a presidential candidate.

Wuerl has spent the past two decades in an environment much more typical of a U.S. Catholic diocese than is Washington, with its unbridled growth. When he returned to his home town in 1988, the diocese was nearly \$3 million in debt and had far too many buildings for its shrinking population. Although the emotional process of closing churches still stings, Wuerl is generally praised as a hard-nosed executive who did what needed to be done. Over five years, he chartered studies and solicited feedback from thousands of parishioners, eventually closing or merging more than 100 parishes.

“He is seen as a man of knowledge. People really respect his competence,” said the Rev. Robert Duch, who was assistant superintendent of schools during the reorganization and worked closely with Wuerl.

The process also helped launch Wuerl’s reputation as a detail machine; he has demanded higher certification and training efforts for priests, deacons, religious teachers and principals and crafted new procedures for everything from clergy finance to school curriculum.

“The priests joke about him -- that we have to build another room onto our houses for all the policies he’s created,” Duch said. “It’s healthy in a sense, because we know what’s expected and we’ll be held accountable.”

A story that occupies a prominent place in Wuerl’s narrative is how hard he pressed to remove a priest accused of sexual abuse. Even after the priest was reinstated by the Vatican’s highest tribunal, Wuerl traveled to Rome to push for a reversal. This story is legendary among people in the diocese, to the point that many suspect their native son wasn’t raised to a more prominent position earlier in his career because of lingering institutional anger at him.

For Wuerl’s part, his spokesman said the story has been overdramatized. “It wasn’t like he was defying Rome,” said the Rev. Ronald Lengwin. Having worked at the Vatican for a decade, from 1969 to 1979, he simply knew how the system worked, Lengwin said.

The Pittsburgh diocese “tends to be conservative, tends to be orthodox,” Lengwin said. Fifty percent of the city is Catholic, as is 40 percent of the six-county diocese, a region where “ethnic” still tends to mean German, Italian and Jewish.

Catholics of Hispanic descent make up about 30 percent of the 560,000-member Washington archdiocese, but only 15,000 to 20,000 Hispanics are in the 800,000-member Pittsburgh diocese, although that population has grown significantly in the past five years. The Washington archdiocese offers 48 Masses in Spanish; the Pittsburgh diocese, two.

Wuerl created an office for “ethnic and cultural communities” five years ago, attaching it to the office for African American Catholics. It also serves smaller populations of African and Asian newcomers. Last year, he funded the first full-time position for ministry to the Spanish-speaking population.

Today, that ministry is based in a modest church-school building next to a huge, dilapidated car dealership. The Rev. Daniel Vallecorsa, an Italian American Pittsburgh native who runs the

mission, said Wuerl sent him to Texas and Mexico for training and celebrated Mass twice at the church -- named St. Hyacinth -- in Spanish. Wuerl does not speak Spanish, Lengwin said, but has been studying it.

Wuerl will be eager to meet the needs of Washington's Hispanics, Vallecorsa predicted.

"He knows that this is the future," he added. "He will be very open to listening to people's needs, and he is very accepting of the Latino style."

Wuerl has made interfaith relations a priority, forming a group of Christian leaders who meet monthly and forging a tight bond with the region's Jewish community. Thursday night, Wuerl was among about 30 city luminaries at Duquesne University for the opening of an exhibit on Pope John Paul II's relationship with Jews.

"You have been a blessing to us," Francesco C. Cesareo, dean of the school's liberal arts program, said of Wuerl before the crowd.

Wuerl appears warm and formal at the same time. He smiles easily, but when he stands he keeps his hands clasped in front of him and his posture perfectly erect.

People who have worked with and observed Wuerl over the decades here said the question isn't whether Wuerl is capable of adjusting to the particulars of Washington, but in what manner. They note his fortitude in tackling the parish closings. Other changes that came more slowly were the launching of ministries to newer ethnic communities and the decision this year to hire deacons and lay people to assume the responsibilities of a shrinking clergy, a process Midwestern dioceses began years ago.

To tackle the needs of a changing church -- and a changing society -- Wuerl needs "to be a man of vision," said Duch, who is now pastor of St. Scholastica church in suburban Allegheny County. "He needs people around him who will collaborate with him and have the courage to make some, dare I say, radical changes. I think we need visionaries, and Bishop Wuerl could be one of those people."

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/20/AR2006052001305_2.html

Keeping the Faith

By Michael Sean Winters

The Washington Post

May 21, 2006

Archbishop-elect Donald Wuerl is a lucky man. In recent years some bishops have been called to take over dioceses left bankrupt -- fiscally and morally -- by the clergy sex-abuse scandal. Others have inherited dioceses in which parishes needed to be closed or priestly vocations had dried up. Still others faced clergy divided along ideological or even racial lines. But it is Wuerl's good luck to follow Cardinal Theodore McCarrick in Washington.

McCarrick moved swiftly against those credibly accused of molesting children, both in Newark, where he served as archbishop for 14 years, and in Washington, where he arrived in 2001. He was a leading force in the effort to adopt a nationwide policy of zero tolerance for sex abuse by clergy.

McCarrick also was a prolific fundraiser. He found the money needed to restore St. Matthew's Cathedral and to open a new seminary, and he raised \$185 million for the archdiocesan endowment. And next month McCarrick will ordain the largest class of new priests in the archdiocese -- 12 -- since 1973. At Easter, according to McCarrick, more people converted to Catholicism in Washington than in any other archdiocese in the country.

The morale of both clergy and laypeople is high in Washington, too. Before McCarrick arrived in 2001, the Priests' Council, a body set up to advise the archbishop on challenges facing the church, would meet every few months. But before each meeting, one of the archbishop's aides would distribute the questions the council members were to ask. This eliminated any conflict -- the archbishop knew his talking points -- but such a scripted process defeated the purpose of the meeting. McCarrick let his priests ask him whatever they wanted.

Perhaps more than any structural reform, McCarrick's folksy charm created a rapport not only with his priests but with the people in the pews.

To borrow Saint Augustine's famous distinction between the City of God (the church) and the City of Man (the world), it is not with the City of God that McCarrick's replacement will face his greatest challenges. In Pittsburgh, Wuerl had to oversee more Catholics and more churches than he will lead in Washington. His challenge now will be in dealing with the City of Man, with the vastly more complicated media and political reality that is Washington.

Some right-wing Catholics had hoped that Pope Benedict XVI would dispatch a more conservative archbishop to Washington, such as Charles J. Chaput of Denver or Raymond Leo Burke of St. Louis, men who had led the effort to deny communion to Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and other pro-choice politicians. If any gnashing of teeth greeted Wuerl's appointment, it came from the right-wing pews.

Wuerl is no bomb thrower. He is a diplomat who will not upstage the Vatican's ambassador, Archbishop Pietro Sambi, who must deal with whomever Americans select to run the country.

While Wuerl may not have McCarrick's homespun ease with the press corps, he is articulate and thoughtful in his remarks. At his debut news conference on Tuesday, he was affable and self-effacing, characteristics that will help him when called upon to testify before Congress -- or Tim Russert.

Spiritual leadership is not, however, only about using modern means of communication effectively. Spiritual leadership is more than just a skill set. It is about a disposition of the heart.

A Washington priest, Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, knew Wuerl when he was a young priest back in the 1970s. Wuerl was then the secretary to Cardinal John Wright, whose final illnesses were made especially painful by the onset of what we probably now would identify as Alzheimer's disease. Albacete spoke of Wuerl's "absolute fidelity to and patience with" the dying cardinal. In short, Wuerl was a good priest. And, whatever your skill sets, you can't be a good archbishop unless you are a good priest first.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/19/AR2006051901367.html>

Child Protection Policy at a Glance

Catholic Standard

February 6, 2008

The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written child protection policy since 1986. Updated several times since, the latest policy revision is effective as of March 2007. The policy has been updated under the guidance of the Archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board, a blue-ribbon group of experts in the field of child welfare. The Child Protection Policy is considered one of the most comprehensive policies in the United States and has been adapted by a number of other dioceses nationwide.

The summary below is not exhaustive nor meant to take the place of reading the entire Child Protection Policy, online at www.adw.org. All clergy, employees and volunteers who work substantially with children are required to read the complete policy and then to sign and submit the acknowledgement form found in the back of the policy booklet.

Mandatory Reporting Requirements

- It is mandatory for any Archdiocesan personnel who has reason to believe or suspect physical abuse, sexual abuse, sexual assault or neglect of a minor to report this to the appropriate civil authorities (see Appendix A for contact information), whether this occurred in the past or present. Confidentiality of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is respected in all situations.
- All suspected abuse and neglect also must be reported to the principal in a school situation, the pastor, Vicar General and director of child protection services.

Victim Assistance

- The Archdiocese offers pastoral response to victims, families, parishes and communities.
- The Archdiocesan Director of Child Protection Services organizes the pastoral response and serves as the liaison with the victim and parish and faith communities.
- The Archdiocese pays for counseling for the victim and, in certain cases, the family.

When an Allegation is Made Against a Lay Person

- The accused is placed on administrative leave pending an investigation by civil authorities, directed to stay away from the site, victim and victim's family and informed of the process and the right to obtain an attorney.
- If charged or arrested, a decision is made whether to allow the person to remain on leave.
- An employee found guilty is terminated. When allegations are not supported, the case is evaluated.

When an Allegation is Made Against a Priest, Deacon or Religious

- The accused is informed of and expected to participate in the process, placed on administrative leave, advised of the right to obtain civil and canonical counsel and may be requested to undergo a comprehensive psychological exam.
- If he/she is a religious or from another diocese, he/she must leave Archdiocesan facilities.
- The Case Review Board is convened for credible allegations against an Archdiocesan priest or deacon. This predominantly lay board assesses the allegation and advises the

Archbishop on the credibility of the allegations, whether they fit the definition of child sexual abuse and on suitability for ministry. The Archbishop makes the final decisions.

- If guilty, the priest/deacon is permanently removed from ministry and not allowed to function as a priest/deacon. He may be laicized.

Child Protection Training and Education

- Required annually for all employees and volunteers who work substantially with children.
- To be available in Archdiocesan schools and parish religious education programs.
- Parents and other adults are strongly encouraged to attend training sessions.

Applications and Background Checks: Lay Employees and Volunteers

- All employees and volunteers who work substantially with children must complete an Application for Employment or Volunteer Application Form and a Criminal History Record Check (CHRC) that includes fingerprinting before they start work.
- While waiting for the results of a submitted CHRC, provisional status may be granted, with the person monitored during that time.
- Results of the CHRCs are filed with the Office of Human Resources.

Background and Reference Checks: Clergy and Religious

- All applicants to the priesthood and permanent diaconate must complete the Application for Employment and Criminal History Record Checks for all states worked in during at least the past ten years, and receive psychological testing and other background checks.
- A religious or priest or deacon from another diocese may get faculties/ministry in the Archdiocese only after his/her religious superior or bishop states in writing no history renders the person unsuitable to work with minors and that he/she has reviewed employment and CHRCs of the individual for the past ten years.
- No extern priest or religious may have residence or full- or part-time or regular weekend ministry in the Archdiocese until background checks have been confirmed. Waivers are possible only for limited ministry that precludes substantial contact with children.

Oversight and Accountability

- The Child Protection Advisory Board, a predominantly lay board, reviews and makes recommendations on child protection policy, oversees and monitors policy implementation and assesses the effectiveness of outreach.
- The policy is assessed and reviewed by the Child Protection Advisory Board every two years.
- An annual report is made to the Child Protection Advisory Board and to parishioners.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Child-Protection-Policy-at-a-Glance/2/27/1566>

Dominican priest who once served in Germantown charged with child abuse

By Richard Szczepanowski

Catholic Standard

July 8, 2008

A Dominican priest who formerly served in the Archdiocese of Washington was charged last week with a single count of custodial child abuse that allegedly occurred in 2001 when he ministered part-time at Mother Seton Parish in Germantown.

Montgomery County Police charged Dominican Father Aaron Joseph "A.J." Cote, 56, last week in an incident that involves a now 21-year-old Germantown man. The man, who was 14 years old when the alleged incident occurred, was an altar server at the parish from 1999 to 2002.

"Our hearts go out to the young man and his family, and to all affected. The charge relates to an allegation received by the archdiocese in 2003 that was immediately reported to the authorities and the Dominican Order," said Susan Gibbs, a spokesperson for the Archdiocese of Washington. "At the time, Cote was no longer serving in the archdiocese. The archdiocese also put the victim in touch with police, immediately offered assistance and to meet with him and his family, and offered its full support in the investigation."

According to Gibbs, the victim filed a civil lawsuit against the Dominican Order and the archdiocese in 2005. She said the Archdiocese of Washington subsequently was released of any liability by the victim. There was no evidence of negligence by the archdiocese and the archdiocese was not part of a financial settlement between the victim and the Dominicans.

"The Archdiocese of Washington did not have any knowledge of any prior wrongdoing by Cote before accepting him for ministry and sought and received written certification from the provincial superior of the Dominicans that there was nothing in Cote's background that would render him unsuitable to work with children," Gibbs said. "The archdiocese also sought and received a similar letter from the Diocese of Springfield where Cote had worked for four years."

The Catholic News Service reported that a civil abuse case filed against the priest and the Dominicans' New York-based province was settled in 2007 for a reported \$1.2 million.

Cote, a resident of New York City, turned himself into Maryland police July 1, was arraigned July 2 and released on \$250,000 bond, said Lucille Baur, a public information officer for Montgomery County police.

Archbishop Donald Wuerl, in a letter read at all Masses last weekend at Mother Seton Parish, assured parishioners there that "when we received this report, our staff immediately reported the allegation to the authorities and offered full cooperation with their investigation. In addition, the Archdiocese reported the matter to the Dominican Order as well as offered support to the young man and his family and offered to meet personally with them. All of these actions were in fulfillment of our Child Protection Policy, which has been in place for over 20 years."

The policy Archbishop Wuerl referred to is a written child protection policy -- considered one of the most comprehensive in the nation -- that has been in effect in this archdiocese since 1986. In addition to regularly updating the policy, the archdiocese also has a Child Protection Advisory board. Marcia Zvara serves as director of the archdiocese's Office of Child Protection.

According to Gibbs, Cote worked at two parishes part-time in the archdiocese: Mother Seton Parish in Germantown, from 1999 to 2002 and St. Jane Frances de Chantal Parish in Bethesda, from 1997 to 1999.

"We ask that anyone who may have been abused to contact the Archdiocese of Washington's Director of Child Protection Services at 301-853-5328 and the Montgomery County Police Family Crimes Division at 240-773-5400 so the person may be held accountable and we may provide assistance," Gibbs said.

The Catholic News Service also reported July 7 that the attorney who represented the Germantown victim in the civil case has filed another civil suit against Cote and the Dominicans on behalf of the other two boys, who are brothers from Springfield, Mass. In that case a mother claims her two young sons were molested by Cote in 2003.

Sidebar: Sexual misconduct in Texas alleged against order priest who taught here

A priest of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity (Trinitarians) who taught at DeMatha High School in Hyattsville and who assisted at Masses at St. Mark's Parish in Hyattsville, has been accused of sexual misconduct that allegedly occurred more than 25 years ago in Texas.

The allegation against Trinitarian Father Lawrence Hernandez, "would have occurred more than 25 years ago when he worked as a priest in the Archdiocese of San Antonio and prior to his entry into the Trinitarians and his teaching at DeMatha Catholic High School," said a statement issued by the Order of the most Holy Trinity.

According to the Trinitarians, officials of the Archdiocese of San Antonio reported the allegation to the civil authorities in Texas.

"Immediately upon receiving the allegation, the Trinitarians placed him on administrative leave and the Archdiocese of Washington withdrew his faculties to function as a priest," said Msgr. Barry C. Knestout, archdiocesan moderator of the curia and vicar for administration, said in a letter read at all Masses last weekend at St. Mark's Parish. "This is the only allegation against Father Lawrence. No charges have been filed."

The statement from the Trinitarians stressed that "in accord with the policies and procedures of the Trinitarians' Code of Conduct, Father Lawrence has been placed on administrative leave and his faculties to perform public priestly ministry have been suspended, pending investigation of the allegation."

The order also said that “until learning of the allegations, neither the Trinitarians nor DeMatha administrators were aware of any misconduct by Father Lawrence. He has denied any wrongdoing during his tenure at DeMatha.”

Msgr. Knestout, in his letter, called on the faithful to pray for those affected by Father Hernandez’s actions, and said that the archdioceses “is committed to doing all we can to ensure that the young people in our care and our broader community are safe from harm.”

“Anyone with knowledge of improper conduct involving Father Lawrence should contact the civil authorities and the Trinitarians at 410-294-9673,” Father Knestout said. “Anyone with knowledge of improper conduct involving any archdiocesan representative is asked to call Marcia Zvara, archdiocesan director of child protection services, at 301-853-5328.”

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Parish-News/Article/Dominican-priest-who-once-served-in-Germantown-charged-with-child-abuse/2/20/1785>

Hearing sheds light on ‘enormous’ potential impact of statute of limitations bill

Catholic Standard

February 11, 2009

During a hearing on a bill that would allow civil suits involving decades old claims to be filed against the Catholic Church, Msgr. Bill Parent, the pastor of St. Peter’s in Waldorf, said senators have two claims to justice to consider - one is the reparation sought by innocent victims of child sexual abuse and another is the justice sought by parishes like his that would feel the devastating financial impact of lawsuits.

“When the Catholic Church is sued, it is parishes like mine that suffer,” he said to Maryland state senators in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. Msgr. Parent said that no one is more outraged than Catholic priests when they find out “one of our own” has abused a child. The pastor added that even if the bill has “the best of motives” it would impair the Church’s ability to help the poor.

Senate Bill 238, sponsored by Sen. Delores Kelley (D-District 10, Baltimore County), creates a two-year window during which time a person who claims he was abused as a child may file a civil suit - a suit for money damages and not a criminal suit - against the alleged abuser and his employer. Mary Ellen Russell, the Maryland Catholic Conference’s executive director, said there is no cap on the amount of money people can claim from private institutions in the civil suits proposed by this legislation. Public institutions are insulated from the financial impact because Maryland has a very small window for filing lawsuits and limited damages for cases involving alleged abuse at public institutions.

A related bill, House Bill 556, was recently introduced in the Maryland House of Delegates. Jane Belford, the chancellor for the Archdiocese of Washington, said similar bills that have passed in other states targeted the Catholic Church. In Delaware, legislation passed that allowed civil suits to be filed under the “window law” and every single suit was brought against the Catholic Church, Belford said.

Russell said the Church is a target because of its diocesan structure and collective holdings. In California, after the statute of limitations was lifted for one year, financial settlements from decades-old abuse cases exceeded \$1.8 billion and several dioceses were forced to file for bankruptcy, Catholic News Service reported.

Belford also said victims who wish to put their perpetrator behind bars can do so “until the day they (the perpetrators) die” because Maryland has no criminal statute of limitations. “That right is available to anyone,” she said.

Vicki Polin, the founder and executive director of The Awareness Center who testified on behalf of the bill, said two percent of child abuse is committed by clergy of all faiths, and the majority occurs within the home. Polin, herself a victim of child sexual abuse at the hands of her father, said the reason the statute of limitations is not fair is because many people are not ready to face the horror of their abuse until much later in life.

Polin said she knows first hand how hard it was “to speak up against the horror we had to endure.”

Al Chesley, a former NFL linebacker who was abused when he was 13 by a police officer and spoke on behalf of the bill, said he wasn’t able to talk to his parents about the abuse because his dad was a police officer.

“I couldn’t tell him that it was one of his friends doing this to me,” he said, as his voice broke with emotion.

J. William Pitcher, an attorney representing Child Victims Voice, said, “In most cases, these folks, when attacked, are at such an age their mind can’t process it ... They don’t know what sex or adult love is. What we have here is a broken system.”

Sen. Jamin (Jamie) Raskin (D- District 20, Montgomery County) said in order for a bill like this to pass, the proponents should not just prove the horrific nature of the abuse, but should focus on proving the psychological and empirical evidence that victims cannot come to terms with the abuse until decades after it occurred.

David Kinkopf, legal counsel for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, said nothing changes the fact that the bill is “unconstitutional” and there is a “very good theory behind the statute of limitations.” Kinkopf explained this by saying private institutions would have to ask themselves, “Did you do three reference checks on that janitor” 40 years ago?

“That is going to be very hard,” he said.

Neil Behan, a former Baltimore County chief of police, said someone was abused in his family and they sought criminal action against the perpetrator. Behan said he knew he could also bring civil action against the perpetrator but his family did not choose that route because, he asked, “How does money provide solace?”

Behan also said that as a former policeman he understands investigating old claims can “lead to fraud.”

“How can you investigate a case that is so old? How can you really pinpoint that it really happened?” he said. Behan currently serves as a member of the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s Independent Review Board.

Archbishop Edwin O’Brien, the archbishop of Baltimore, said in a column that appeared in the Catholic Review this month, “this legislation would devastate our archdiocese financially, our parishes, schools, and other valuable ministries ... The Catholic Church is the largest private provider of social services in Maryland ... the potential impact is enormous.”

The Archdiocese of Washington’s website includes a background paper on the issue that was printed in last week’s Catholic Standard, and recommended action for Maryland residents to take. The archdiocese’s online action center can be found at www.adw.org/service/default.asp .

The Archdiocese of Washington has a Child Protection Policy that it instituted more than two decades ago. The policy includes mandatory criminal background checks for all employees and volunteers who work with children, age-appropriate educational programs for children to safeguard them from abuse, and mandatory reporting of suspected abuse cases to civil authorities. The Child Protection Policy can be found at the archdiocesan website at www.adw.org .

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Hearing-sheds-light-on-enormous-potential-impact-of-statute-of-limitations-bill/2/27/2226>

Statute of limitations bill defeated in the Maryland State Senate

Catholic Standard

February 24, 2009

Maryland State Senate Bill 238, that would allow decades old child-abuse civil suits to be filed against the Catholic Church, was defeated in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in a 9-2 vote on Feb. 12. Officials from the Archdiocese of Washington, the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Maryland Catholic Conference had strongly opposed the bill.

State Senators Jennie Forehand (D- District 17, Montgomery County) and James Brochin (D- District 42, Baltimore County) voted in favor of the bill.

State Senators who voted against the bill included Norman Stone Jr. (D- District 6, Baltimore County), Lisa Gladden (D- District 41, Baltimore City), Sen. Larry Haines (R- District 5, Baltimore County & Carroll County), Brian Frosh (D- District 16, Montgomery County), Alex Mooney (R- District 3, Frederick & Washington Counties), Jamie Raskin (D- District 20, Montgomery County), Nancy Jacobs (R- District 34, Cecil & Harford Counties), Anthony Muse (D- District 26, Prince George's County) and Bryan Simonaire (R- District 31, Anne Arundel County).

Mary Ellen Russell, the Maryland Catholic Conference's executive director, said, "We are really, really pleased to see that the committee rejected this legislation. They fully recognized that it is unjust to private institutions, and it's a law that does nothing to protect children and ensure that child abusers are quickly identified and prosecuted."

Russell said she hopes that because this bill has been rejected so consistently it will not be re-introduced next year.

"I also hope we work toward strengthening measures to protect children and ensure that child abuse doesn't happen in the first place," she said.

Russell said the related bill, House Bill 556, that was recently introduced in the Maryland House of Delegates, will not "get much traction now that it has already been rejected in the senate."

If the Senate bill would have passed it would have created a two-year window during which time a person who claims he was abused as a child may file a civil suit $\text{\$}$ a suit for money damages and not a criminal suit $\text{\$}$ against the alleged abuser and his employer. Russell said there is no cap on the amount of money people can claim from private institutions in the civil suits proposed by this legislation. Public institutions are insulated from the financial impact because Maryland has a very small window for filing lawsuits and limited damages for cases involving alleged abuse at public institutions.

The Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Policy, which in 1986 was one of the first of its kind in the United States, includes mandatory fingerprinting and criminal background checks for staff members and volunteers who have significant contact with children. The policy also includes age-appropriate educational programs for children, to protect them from abuse. The

archdiocesan policy, which is online at www.adw.org , also requires that suspected abuse cases be reported immediately to civil authorities.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Statute-of-limitations-bill-defeated-in-the-Maryland-State-Senate/2/27/2266>

Abuse allegation made against former Baltimore priest who served as RCIA director at St. Raphael's Parish

Catholic Standard

March 31, 2009

An allegation of sexual abuse of a minor has been made against a former Archdiocese of Baltimore priest who formerly served as RCIA director at St. Raphael's Parish in Rockville.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore learned that Michael Barnes, who left the priesthood in 1988, has been accused of sexually abusing a minor over a number of years in the late 1970s to early 1980s, while he was assigned to St. Clare's Parish in Essex.

"Michael Barnes was hired in 2001 by a prior pastor (of St. Raphael's) and worked for about seven years as RCIA director. In this position, he worked solely with adults in faith formation," Bishop Barry Knestout, vicar general of the Archdiocese of Washington and the moderator of the curia, wrote in a letter to parishioners of St. Raphael Parish. "Mr. Barnes has not been employed at St. Raphael's since early January when we learned of this matter."

According to a statement from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Barnes took a leave of absence from the priesthood in 1988 and has not served publicly as a priest since that time. The Baltimore Archdiocese also reported the allegation to the Baltimore County State's Attorney's Office. The alleged victim has been offered counseling assistance.

Bishop Knestout, in his letter, said that Archdiocese of Washington officials were informed when the allegation was made and were kept informed as Baltimore officials "followed through on the preliminary information they received."

He said that no notice could be issued earlier because "the information was incomplete." He added that once Baltimore completed its investigation, an announcement could be made.

Bishop Knestout also asked for prayers for the person who came forward with the allegation.

Barnes was ordained a priest in 1975. In addition to serving at St. Clare's Parish in Essex, he served at parishes in Overlea, Baltimore, Rodgers Forge and Cumberland.

The bishop's letter also noted that anyone aware of improper conduct by a person involved in archdiocesan ministry should call 301-853-5328. The Archdiocese of Washington's website at www.adw.org includes the archdiocese's Child Protection Policy.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Abuse-allegation-made-against-former-Baltimore-priest-who-served-as-RCIA-director-at-St-Raphael-s-Parish/2/27/2407>

A vicious attack

By Richard Szczepanowski

Catholic Standard

March 30, 2010

This week, Catholics throughout the world celebrate the happiest and saddest events in the story of our redemption. It is during Holy Week that we recall Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, His institution of the Holy Eucharist and the priesthood, His suffering and death, and His glorious resurrection.

The Washington Post marked the start of this holiest of weeks with a March 29 editorial cartoon by Tom Toles depicting monstrous-looking priests using a picture of Jesus as a lure to attract children so they can sexually abuse them. The priests are labeled "Decades of Abusive Priests" and they hold a lasso in front of the picture of Jesus, which is labeled with the words of Matthew 19:14, "Let the little children come to me." The priests, with their sinister eyes and lascivious grins, note, "What a great recruitment poster," and at the bottom of the cartoon, they note that they can forgive themselves for their abuses because "we're priests!"

This tasteless, vicious and spiteful cartoon is an offense to hundreds of thousands of local Catholics who are preparing for Easter. It is even more of an offense to the hundreds of priests in the Archdiocese of Washington - and the countless thousands of priests around the world - who have devoted their lives to Christ, His Church and His faithful.

And, let this fact escape no one's attention: the cartoon appeared on the very day that 200 priests of this archdiocese gathered with Archbishop Donald Wuerl and our auxiliary bishops at the Cathedral of St. Matthew to renew their commitment as priests and to receive the holy oils that they will use throughout the year for administering the sacraments.

This cartoon is not social commentary, it is an attack on the Catholic faith. Why do I say this? For several reasons.

The priests in the cartoon are depicted as amorphous blobs trying to trap children. In reality, Monday's Chrism Mass demonstrated that priests come from all backgrounds and ages, but they share a common call to give up their lives in service to their people. The oils that were blessed at the Chrism Mass and then distributed to the priests are used by the priests to baptize babies and adults entering the Church, and anoint those who are sick or dying. The priests are there for their people, on call 24 hours a day.

The cartoon makes no mention of the fact that people in professions other than the priesthood make up the vast majority of child abusers in our society. It should be pointed out that this is a problem for all of society to face, that occurs most often within families, that cuts across all occupations and denominations.

The Post and other media fixate on decades-old abuse cases, but they have all but ignored the fact that the Catholic Church has adopted stringent child protection policies (see our

archdiocesan website at www.adw.org) that are much more strict than those in place at public schools or other institutions serving children.

There are relentless and constant attacks on Pope Benedict, who has done more than anyone to strengthen the Church's child protection policies, and who spoke movingly about his sorrow over the issue during his April 2008 Mass at Nationals Park and then afterward personally met with a small group of abuse survivors at the Apostolic Nunciature (Vatican Embassy).

I have to question why the media have been so unrelenting in covering this scandal without presenting the complete story of who Catholics are and what we believe. In the weeks after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York City and the Pentagon, we were told time and again that these actions of a relatively few Islamic extremists should not be an indictment against an entire religion, its teaching and its adherents. Yet, in the wake of allegations of sexual misconduct by a small percentage of Catholic priests, it seems that our religion, our hierarchy, and our beliefs have been subject to an almost incessant barrage of criticism.

Our Church has been tireless in addressing this problem. Allegations against our priests have been investigated and addressed and subjected to impeccable scrutiny by both civil and Church authorities. We have reached out with Christ's love to those victimized by abuse, offering prayers, compassion and healing.

We, the faithful who support our priests, must be the first to stand up and say that the actions of a few bad clergymen are not an indication of what our religion is or what we believe or who our priests are. The Washington Post's vicious Holy Week cartoon defaming priests abuses the good name and good works of priests who give their lives in serving their people. The Post's slogan, "If you don't get it, you don't get it," certainly applies to this cartoon's attack on the priesthood and the Catholic Church.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/Blog/Blog/Article/A-vicious-attack/9/10/3667>

Resurrection and redemption as the church copes at Easter

By Donald W. Wuerl

The Washington Post – Op-Ed

April 4, 2010

Today, Christians worldwide celebrate the resurrection of Christ. Lent is over; Good Friday has passed. To a church that has experienced the deep pain of clergy sexual abuse, these days are a reminder that from pain and sorrow eventually come hope, redemption and new life.

This new life will come only by confronting sexual abuse head-on, taking responsibility for the wrongs of the past and committing to doing all that we can never to allow the tragedy of abuse to happen again. In the United States, we bishops have put in place tough standards for reporting allegations to civil authorities because we recognize that abuse is not only a sin but also a serious crime. In the Archdiocese of Washington and in dioceses nationwide, we mandate child protection training for adults and education for children. Seminarians, clergy, volunteers and employees who work with children must undergo criminal background checks. Independent advisory boards of lay experts guide our work, and, perhaps most important, we continue to reach out to those harmed to help them heal from their pain.

In 2008-09, 6 million children in the United States received lessons on recognizing inappropriate behavior and what to do if someone tries to harm them or makes them feel uncomfortable. Two million adults underwent background checks. Here in Washington, we have had a written child protection policy for nearly 25 years.

This commitment to safety has been done with the support and leadership of Pope Benedict XVI.

Then-Cardinal Ratzinger, as the head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and Pope John Paul II were strong voices supporting the American bishops when we asked for changes in canon law and for special norms to expedite the removal of priests involved in sexual abuse of minors in a quick and decisive manner.

Pope Benedict has made pastoral care a priority. Two years ago this month, he stood with us at Mass at Nationals Park and spoke about the sexual abuse of minors: “No words of mine could describe the pain and harm inflicted by such abuse. It is important that those who have suffered be given loving pastoral attention. Nor can I adequately describe the damage that has occurred within the community of the Church.”

One of the most poignant moments of the Holy Father’s visit to our city was his private visit with victims of clergy sexual abuse. He spoke with each person, he listened to them, he prayed with them and he heard how devastating the abuse was to their lives.

Clergy sexual abuse, and in fact all sexual abuse, must be addressed wherever it occurs. No child should ever be harmed. But the wrong actions of some do not justify the vilification of all. The priests who harmed children violated the heart of their ministry and have harmed not only our young people and our community of faith but also the vast majority of their brother priests who faithfully live out their promises to serve Christ and his people.

It is not easy to be a priest today. In a culture sometimes overly focused on material goods and getting ahead professionally, it may be hard to understand why someone would voluntarily choose a life of service and a job that is 24-7. Priests are there for others when they are in despair, grieving and destitute. They help people find hope in the darkness, a reason for living and the love of God.

Some of the most significant work of priests is found in what so many take for granted -- directly, quietly, caringly and effectively serving people in parishes. Priests celebrate Mass, baptize children, witness marriages, bring reconciliation through confession, serve the poor, console the sick and bury our loved ones. Their selfless ministry helps hold together the Catholic faith family and the wider community.

Priests don't expect thanks and often don't receive it. They see the priesthood as an opportunity to bring the love of Christ to others and to help them come closer to God. It is in earthen vessels that we carry a magnificent treasure.

As the Catholic Church continues to face the tragedy of clergy sexual abuse, we must pray for the victims, recommit to doing all that we can to keep children safe, and remember and pray for the priests who every day faithfully live out the deep love that Christ has for all of us.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/04/02/AR2010040202983.html>

German bishops remove priest who served in Washington

Catholic Standard

April 21, 2010

The German Bishops' Conference has informed the Archdiocese of Washington that it received allegations of misconduct that date to the 1980s-early 1990s involving Reverend Michael Schapfel, who served as the chaplain of the 75-family German Pastoral Mission of Washington, DC from 2005 until earlier this month.

The allegations involved young women in Germany. No allegations involving his work in the United States have been received by the Diocese of Mainz or the Archdiocese of Washington.

The German Bishops' Conference noted that the Diocese of Mainz, upon learning of the allegations on March 30, informed the civil authorities, recalled Father Michael Schapfel to Germany and removed him from all ministry. The Archdiocese of Washington was informed of these actions on April 20. The German Bishops' Conference has written to the people of the pastoral mission, and will send a representative to meet with them in the near future. The Archdiocese of Washington also is offering pastoral care to the community.

Michael Schapfel was ordained as a priest of the Diocese of Mainz in 1984. He held a number of positions in Germany, including an assignment with the Secular Institute of Schoenstatt Diocesan Priests. It was a report from the Schoenstatt to the Diocese of Mainz that led to his removal from ministry. According to a press release of the German Bishops' Conference, the Schoenstatt had some information as early as 2004 that suggested a past inappropriate relationship, but the information was not shared.

Consistent with the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington, Father Schapfel had a letter of suitability from his home diocese, affirming that he had no known criminal background nor anything that would "render him unsuitable to work with children"; he attended mandatory child protection training in the Archdiocese of Washington; and he signed an affidavit that he read and agreed to follow the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington.

The Archdiocese of Washington takes the protection of children very seriously, and has had a written Child Protection Policy for nearly 25 years (online at www.adw.org). This policy mandates reporting to civil authorities; FBI criminal background checks and training for all clergy, employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children; safe environment training for children; and healing for those harmed. The Archdiocese also has a Child Protection Advisory Board of primarily lay experts to advise on all matters involving the protection of children.

Anyone with any knowledge of inappropriate conduct by a member of the clergy or an employee or volunteer is asked to contact local authorities and the archdiocesan director of child protection services, Marcia Zvara, at 301-853-5328.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/News/Article/German-bishops-remove-priest-who-served-in-Washington/2/2/3745>

Panel of experts assists archdiocese in protecting children

Catholic Standard

June 15, 2010

Judge Dennis McHugh, a retired associate judge for the Montgomery County Circuit, chairs a blue ribbon panel of experts who serve as members of the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Advisory Board.

"They want to be a part of providing a protective system for all the children in the archdiocese," he said of the board, which includes a local police chief, a pastor, a counselor with expertise in helping survivors of sexual violence and abuse, a pediatrician who specializes in forensic child abuse medical investigation and treatment, and a licensed clinical social worker and a sexual abuse investigator.

Judge McHugh brings insights gained from serving from 1996-2004 as the judge-in-charge of the Juvenile Division of the Circuit Court of Montgomery County.

"One of the things I learned is there's a lot more of it (abuse) that went on than I ever thought it did. I saw concretely how much damage occurs to a victim and a victim's family when a child is abused sexually, physically or emotionally," the judge said. "...Anybody who's a victim needs treatment or help."

While many headlines emphasize abuse committed by clergy, the judge said, "I don't think it (child sexual abuse) is restricted to any strata of society, any income level, race or profession." From the cases he witnessed, "probably the most frequent abuser was the mother's boyfriend," he said.

Anne Hoffman, a licensed clinical social worker and supervisor for the sexual abuse unit of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services, also serves on the archdiocese's Child Protection Advisory Board.

"It's a dynamic board. These people are involved daily (with these issues). They (board members) are deeply committed professionals... who care about keeping children safe," she said.

Hoffman is a member of St. Raphael Parish in Rockville, and Judge McHugh attends St. Peter in Olney. Board members may include both Catholics and members of other faiths. "We are members of this community. We can be partners, and use our expertise, training and knowledge to assist the Church in protecting children," Hoffman said.

Judge McHugh said the panel of experts is able to advise the archdiocese on the best practices in the field to prevent child abuse and for dealing with abuse allegations. The board reviews archdiocesan child safety policies and procedures, assesses outreach to victims and educational programs, and issues an annual report. He called the Child Protection Policy "a solid policy that really does have reasonable measures to screen out potential abusers."

The archdiocese adopted its Child Protection Policy in 1986, and was one of the first in the nation to do so. The policy, which has been updated several times since then, emphasizes healing

for abuse survivors, mandates reporting of suspected abuse to civil authorities, requires criminal background checks and fingerprinting for adults who work with or volunteer with children, and requires child safety educational programs for adults and students.

Hoffman praised the archdiocese's child protection efforts, saying, "(It) has done everything in its power to respond appropriately and proactively to create a safe environment for children."

"I think that the program set up in the Washington Archdiocese has really been effective, and the response from the archdiocese should be a model around the country and the world," said Hoffman, who has worked as a sex abuse investigator for the county and who has given talks nationally on child maltreatment and sexual abuse. "It (the policy) is transparent, it is incredibly thorough. The absolute focus is to protect children, and it spares no expense."

Hoffman noted that "the kinds of measures they're taking in (Catholic) schools far outweigh what the public schools are doing."

Education is essential in order to protect children, she said. "You can't identify a sex abuser from looking at them," Hoffman said, noting that pedophiles try to build trust with children and adults. "...We need to educate people, we need to educate children proactively about this issue. Don't expect the world to educate your child. You need to educate your children (about this)."

The clinical social worker and her husband have three children and three grandchildren, and she has spoken with her 4-year-old twin grandsons about being safe. Too often, people shy away from this topic, but parents need to talk with their children about improper touching, and about their right to say "no," she said.

"It's usually people children know and trust who do this to them. You need to make sure children understand they have the right to say 'no' to people," Hoffman said, adding that children also need to understand that not all secrets are good secrets. "Nobody should ever tell you, 'Don't tell your mommy or daddy.'"

Like other members of the board, Judge McHugh approaches the issue not only as an expert in the field, but also as a parent. He and his wife have two sons and one infant grandson. "When you're a parent, you're concerned about all the hazards a child might encounter. When you think about how defenseless little ones are, you realize it really is the responsibility of us adults to set up a protection system for them," he said.

The judge recommended that parents "know where your children are, and who they're with, and be aware of what's going on in the culture (that) they might be swept into."

Judge McHugh praised the child protection educational materials that the archdiocese offers on its website at www.adw.org, where parents can find information on topics like safety tips, internet safety, healthy teen relationships, and on preventing sexting and cyber bullying.

"If you don't have those on hand, read them over," he said.

Both the judge and clinical social worker have served on the Child Protection Advisory Board since it was established in 2002. Both said that they wanted to help their Church do all it could to protect children. “Each of us should look for an opportunity within the Church to use the gifts God has given us, to help the Church,” Judge McHugh said.

Sidebar: Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection Advisory Board

In July 2002, the Archdiocese of Washington established a Child Protection Advisory Board that reports directly to the archbishop. This Advisory Board has a broad mandate to:

- Review archdiocesan policies and procedures and recommend ways in which they can be strengthened, improved or modified
- Oversee the implementation of the policies throughout the archdiocese and its ministries
- Assist in developing appropriate mechanisms to ensure compliance with the policies
- Assess the effectiveness of victim assistance efforts by the archdiocese and make recommendations for improvement
- Review and advise on standards of conduct for those in positions of trust and on education, training and outreach programs for clergy, staff, educators and others, as well as safe environment programs for children

The seven volunteer members all have particular knowledge, insight or expertise in the protection of minors, and serve three-year terms. The board meets several times each year, has updated the Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy and publishes an annual report on archdiocesan efforts in the area of child protection. The Advisory Board is in addition to the Archdiocesan Case Review Board, a predominantly lay board established in 1993 to assist the archbishop in assessing allegations and fitness for ministry.

The members of the Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection Advisory Board are:

Chairman

The Honorable Dennis McHugh, associate judge, Montgomery County Circuit, retired August 2005. He previously served as judge-in-charge, Juvenile Division, Circuit Court of Montgomery County, from 1996-2004. He has served on numerous commissions related to juvenile justice.

Additional Members

Eileen Dombo, PhD, LICSW, visiting assistant professor, National Catholic School of Social Work, The Catholic University of America. She is former director of counseling services for the DC Rape Crisis Center and consultant for a number of victim assistance organizations. Dr. Dombo has extensive experience in counseling survivors of sexual violence and abuse.

Msgr. William English, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy parish in Potomac. Ordained in 1969, he has served in a number of parishes, several terms as an Archdiocesan Consultor and as Archdiocesan Secretary for Clergy, Director of Priest Personnel, Director of Continuing Education for Priests and Secretary for Parish Life and Worship.

Nerita Estampador-Ulep, M.D., a pediatrician who specializes in forensic child abuse medical investigation and treatment. She works for the Montgomery County Public Health and School Health Services, and has been recognized by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Maryland Governor's Council on Child Abuse. She also is member of the Montgomery County Child Fatality Review team and of the State Child Fatality Review Board as a representative of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Anne Hoffman, LCSW-C, a licensed clinical social worker and supervisor for the sexual abuse unit of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Child Welfare Services. Since 1996, she has worked as a sex abuse investigator for the county HHS. She has been honored by the Child Welfare League of America (2000 National Child Welfare Worker Merit Award) and has given dozens of presentations and talks nationally on sexual abuse investigations, child maltreatment and sexual abuse, etc.

J. Thomas Manger, Montgomery County police chief. A 33-year police veteran, he served for 27 years with the Fairfax County (Virginia) Police Department, eventually rising to the rank of chief of police in 1998. In 2004, he was appointed chief of police for Montgomery County. Chief Manger has received numerous awards throughout his career, including the Silver Medal of Valor and is widely recognized for his commitment to high ethical standards for policing and enacting new policies to increase departmental accountability.

Michael Nugent, retired international representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, parishioner at Holy Trinity parish in Georgetown, married and the father of two.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Panel-of-experts-assists-archdiocese-in-protecting-children-/2/27/3919>

Child Protection Policy rigorously applied, Cardinal Wuerl writes in letter to priests

Catholic Standard

March 28, 2011

In a March 21 letter to priests on the Archdiocesan Child Protection Policy, Cardinal Wuerl noted that, “Our policy and its application allow me to assure you that there is no priest in ministry known to the Archdiocese of Washington against whom there is a credible allegation of child sexual abuse.”

In the letter, the cardinal noted the archdiocese strictly follows its Child Protection Policy that has been in place since 1986, updated in 1993, 1999 and 2003, and is currently being reviewed for another update. “Under this policy, all allegations of sexual abuse of a minor are immediately reported to the civil authorities for their investigation,” the cardinal wrote.

If such an allegation involves a priest, it is also reported immediately to the Archdiocesan Case Review Board, and diocesan officials also begin an investigation and reach out with an offer of pastoral care to the alleged victim.

If the Case Review Board finds the allegation to be credible, “the priest is placed immediately on administrative leave and removed from ministry, pending final disposition of the matter,” the cardinal wrote. Cardinal Wuerl also noted that whatever the outcome of the investigation, the Case Review Board is asked to advise the archbishop on the priest’s suitability for ministry, regardless of whether there has been a violation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

“Our Child Protection Policy reflects our concern for the protection of children and the prevention of abuse,” wrote Cardinal Wuerl, who noted that the policy “is fully responsive to and in compliance with the provisions contained in the revised Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons confirmed by the Holy See.”

The U.S. bishops adopted the charter in 2002 and approved revisions to it three years later. The archdiocese’s compliance with the charter has been audited every year since 2003 by a team of outside professionals who have reviewed records and paid week-long on-site visits in August 2003, October 2004, August 2007 and September 2010.

“The Archdiocese of Washington has been found to be in complete compliance every year,” the cardinal wrote. “At the same time, we have just completed a full review of all priest personnel files, as has been done in the past, to ensure that there is no priest in active ministry against whom there is a credible allegation of sexual abuse of a minor.”

Cardinal Wuerl said he was making this information known to them “so that you are fully aware of what we are doing to ensure the safety of children and young people, the integrity of our priestly ministry and the good name of the Church. My hope is that all of this information will be helpful to you as you address any concerns from the faithful whom you serve.”

In his letter, Cardinal Wuerl expressed gratitude to the priests of the archdiocese for their “dedication to the care of all of our faithful.”

“All of us together continue to do all that we can to ensure that every child in our care is safe from harm,” Cardinal Wuerl wrote in the letter to priests in the Archdiocese of Washington. The archdiocesan Child Protection Policy also requires criminal background checks and fingerprinting for adults who work with or volunteer with children, and requires child safety educational programs for adults and students.

Media attention in recent weeks has focused on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, where Cardinal Justin Rigali placed 21 priests on administrative leave from their clerical assignments on March 7. That action responded to a Philadelphia grand jury report that called for that archdiocese to “review all of the old allegations against currently active priests and to remove from ministry all of the priests with credible allegations against them.” The Philadelphia priests’ placement on leave is not a final determination of guilt or innocence, according to a press release issued by that archdiocese.

In Philadelphia, Cardinal Rigali issued a statement saying that sexual abuse is a crime that is “always wrong and always evil... The task before us now is to recognize where we (in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia) have fallen short and to let our actions speak to our resolve.”

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Child-Protection-Policy-rigorously-applied-Cardinal-Wuerl-writes-in-letter-to-priests/2/27/4460>

Child Protection Advisory Board meets, will again revise and strengthen archdiocesan policy

Catholic Standard

March 29, 2011

On March 28, the blue ribbon panel of experts who serve on the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Advisory Board met and worked to review and update the archdiocese's Child Protection Policy. Adapted in 1986 as one of the first such policies in the nation, that policy was also updated in 1993, 1999 and 2003. The board reviews the archdiocese's child protection policies and procedures on a regular basis and recommends ways in which they can be strengthened.

"We look at it (the policy) in terms of experience, how does it work for the people out there in our parishes," said Judge Dennis McHugh, a retired associate judge for the Montgomery County Circuit, who chairs the panel.

The judge added that a key goal of the Child Protection Policy "is making sure people who might injure them (children) are excluded from access."

The archdiocese's Child Protection Policy emphasizes healing for abuse survivors, mandates reporting of suspected abuse to civil authorities, requires criminal background checks and fingerprinting for adults who work with or volunteer with children, and requires child safety educational programs for adults and students.

At the beginning of the meeting, Cardinal Wuerl greeted the board members, thanking them for "the rigorous way you address everything that comes before you, with understanding, professionalism and with the best interests of our young people at heart."

The archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board includes with a wide range of experience in child welfare, social service, law enforcement and pastoral ministry. The board members include a local police chief, a pastor, a counselor with expertise in helping survivors of sexual violence and abuse, a retired pediatrician who specialized in forensic child abuse medical investigation and treatment, and a licensed clinical social worker and a sexual abuse investigator.

"The insights and experiences of this terrific team help us to put together the right guidance for the archbishop and the staff of the archdiocese," said Judge McHugh, who served from 1986-2004 as the judge-in-charge of the Juvenile Division of the Circuit Court of Montgomery County.

Washington Auxiliary Bishop Barry Knestout, the archdiocese's vicar general and moderator of the curia, noted later that, "The Child Protection Advisory Board is vitally important to the Archdiocese of Washington in a number of ways. It serves a significant role in helping to ensure that every child in the care of the Church, its employees and volunteers, is safe from harm."

The board also monitors the archdiocese's compliance with its Child Protection Policy and annually reports to parishioners on archdiocesan efforts in the area of child protection. The members of the board also serve as members of the Case Review Board, which assesses the

credibility of allegations of sexual abuse of minors by clergy and advises the Archbishop on determinations of suitability for ministry.

Anne Hoffman, another member of the Child Protection Advisory Board, is a licensed clinical social worker who serves as a supervisor for special projects for Child Welfare Services of Montgomery County's Department of Health and Human Services. Speaking of the need to periodically update and strengthen the archdiocese's Child Protection Policy, she said, "We live in a fluid culture. We need to be sure we are completely up-to-date with our policies and practices. Just as the world around us changes, we need to make sure our response changes."

In an interview after the meeting, Hoffman also said the board works diligently to serve families, to "make sure we're doing the best for them and their kids." The board's goal is to strengthen the policy, and make it clear and easy to understand. "The tighter we weave the safety net, the more likely it is to hold," she said.

A member of St. Raphael Parish in Rockville, she said, "I'm on that board not just as a Catholic and investigator, but as a parent and grandparent."

Like other members of the board, Judge McHugh approaches the issue not only as an expert in the field, but also as a parent. He and his wife have two sons and one infant grandson. "When you're a parent, you're concerned about all the hazards a child might encounter. When you think about how defenseless little ones are, you realize it really is the responsibility of us adults to set up a protection system for them," said the judge, who is a member of St. Peter Parish in Olney.

Other members of the archdiocese's Child Protection Advisory Board include Eileen Dombo, Ph.D., LICSW, visiting assistant professor at the National Catholic School of Social Work of The Catholic University of America, who has extensive experience in counseling survivors of sexual violence and abuse; Msgr. William English, pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Potomac, who has served at several local parishes and in archdiocesan administrative positions; Dr. Nerita Estampador-Ulep, a retired pediatrician who specialized in forensic child abuse medical investigation and treatment; Montgomery County Police Chief J. Thomas Manger; and Michael Nugent, a retired international representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

In a letter to priests earlier this month, Cardinal Wuerl wrote that the archdiocese strictly follows its Child Protection Policy and is in full compliance with the bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. "Our policy and its application allow me to assure you that there is no priest in ministry known to the Archdiocese of Washington against whom there is a credible allegation of child sexual abuse," the cardinal wrote. "... All of us together continue to do all that we can to ensure that every child in our care is safe from harm."

Sidebar: Child protection in the archdiocese

Twenty-five years ago, the Archdiocese of Washington in 1986 became one of the first dioceses in the United States to have a written Child Protection Policy. The archdiocese was the first to

use electronic fingerprinting for background checks, and the policy has become a model for other dioceses across the country. It is available online at www.adw.org .

The policy emphasizes efforts to bring healing to abuse survivors and mandates reporting of abuse to civil authorities.

The policy requires that employees and volunteers with substantial contact with children must complete an application, be fingerprinted for a criminal background check and attend a child protection workshop. Since 2003, when updated fingerprinting and education programs were put in place, nearly 40,000 adults have undergone background checks and training.

Children in archdiocesan schools and religious education programs receive education on how to recognize abuse and on how to protect themselves. The materials emphasize Catholic teaching and provide age-appropriate lessons. Every year, about 40,000 youth in the archdiocese receive safe environment training.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Child-Protection-Advisory-Board-meets-will-again-revise-and-strengthen-archdiocesan-policy/2/27/4474>

The Vatican's Man In Washington

The Vatican's Representative Here Is a Key Link between Us Catholics and the Pope. Cerebral And Reserved, Donald Wuerl Prefers To Work Quietly, But He Hasn't Always Been Able To Avoid Confrontation.

By Jennifer Skalka Tulumello

The Washingtonian

October 17, 2011

Donald Wuerl, the archbishop of Washington, has walked down the aisle at St. Mary of the Mount in Pittsburgh many times—as a child, a student, and a priest. But when he visited the parish last winter at the start of the Advent season, a beaming Wuerl stood before the community for the first time as a cardinal.

He seemed at peace in the small 19th-century church, nodding in the direction of former classmates and neighbors who lined the pews.

One of the most respected links between the pope and US Catholics, Wuerl is one of 18 American cardinals and one of 194 in the world. In 2011, he celebrates his 45th anniversary as a priest, his 25th as a bishop, and his fifth as leader of the Archdiocese of Washington.

“The word ‘cardinal’ means hinge, a very simple concept,” he said during his homily at St. Mary of the Mount. Wuerl explained that wherever he is, his mission is to be the link between the pope and parishioners.

Wuerl spent 18 years as bishop of Pittsburgh before he was asked in 2006 to leave his hometown for the nation’s capital. His assignment to Washington might have had elements of personal disappointment, but he never let on. And it certainly came with a new profile.

“Whoever is the archbishop of Washington takes over the role as interlocutor for the Church on national and international politics,” says John Allen, a senior correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter. “It makes you a big player.”

Wuerl’s move to Washington also brought an honor: Last fall, he secured membership in the most elite of Catholic circles—the College of Cardinals. Some 400 friends attended his November elevation in Rome. Wuerl had to leave his hometown to advance in the Church hierarchy; only certain cities are what are known as cardinalatial sees, and Pittsburgh isn’t one of them.

But even as he rises to a new place of influence within the Church, assimilating into Washington’s culture hasn’t proved easy. His trademark reserve has been perceived by some as chilly, and an aversion to playing to the press has contributed to a sometimes rocky stint here. He has feuded with DC Council leaders during their effort to pass a same-sex-marriage law. And unlike his predecessor, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Wuerl doesn’t appear to relish the fundraisers and schmooze-fests that come with a job in the same area code as the White House.

“It’s been difficult for him to adjust to how political everything is in Washington,” says Ann Rodgers, a longtime Pittsburgh Post-Gazette religion reporter who knows Wuerl well. In his hometown, she says, he had a bigger role on a smaller stage: “Being the Catholic bishop is kind of like being the king of Pittsburgh. You outrank the mayor.”

Washington has many kings—the President, Supreme Court justices, congressional leaders, diplomats. So Wuerl is doing what Wuerl does best: working under the radar to breathe energy into the local Church through advocacy of core Catholic philosophies. He has cowritten a new book, *The Mass: The Glory, the Mystery, the Tradition*, published in February. He has launched a public-relations campaign called “The Light Is on for You,” with ads that appear on city buses to urge wayward Catholics back to church. Under Wuerl’s direction, the archdiocese is opening DC’s first seminary for college-age men this fall near Catholic University. And the cardinal has imposed a laser-like focus on the financial health of the diocese, including an increase in the tuition-assistance fund for schoolchildren.

Still, confidants wonder if, given a decades-long relationship with Pope Benedict XVI, Wuerl would prefer to finish his remaining years of service in the Vatican. Or Pittsburgh.

Wuerl assigns images to his dioceses—Pittsburgh is his mother, Washington his bride. He says a good bishop must love his diocese as a good husband or wife loves a spouse, even if the match is less than perfect. “You can’t say, ‘Well, I love you, but I wish you were a foot taller and I’m going to remind you of that every day,’” he says.

Still, there’s a wistful tone when he talks about Pittsburgh. The community there was more cohesive, he says. “Here the secular is the dominant voice. That is just the nature of Washington.”

Wuerl gets a call from the Vatican

The call came during a priest-council meeting in Pittsburgh. The rector of the seminary handed Wuerl a note. The nuncio—the Vatican’s diplomatic representative to the United States in Washington—was on the phone.

After years of rumors of his departure to other visible posts in big cities from Boston to Los Angeles, the time finally had come. The Vatican asked Wuerl to leave Pittsburgh for a smaller but more influential diocese. With nearly 603,000 Catholics, Washington is the country’s 32nd-largest diocese; Pittsburgh is the 26th.

Until then, “he was the perpetual bridesmaid,” says Rocco Palmo, editor of *Whispers in the Loggia*, a popular Web site covering Catholic news and politics.

Tall and lithe, Wuerl has—in some ways like the current occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue—an almost professorial disposition. He’s the author of 15 books and was groomed at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, regarded as the Harvard of the Catholic Church.

His is a voice that calls from the pulpit softly. There is no thunder. His homilies usually lack a personal anecdote that neatly ties together modern life and Catholic values.

Wuerl is seen as his predecessor's foil. McCarrick, who retired, enjoyed the Washington social scene. A boisterous New Yorker, he wasn't known for relishing the managerial aspects of his position. Allen describes McCarrick as "very charismatic, very media-savvy, very good at external relations."

Wuerl is cerebral, introverted, and focused on getting things done. As archbishop of Washington, he manages more than 370 priests and 200 deacons, 140 parishes, and some 98 Catholic schools. The archdiocese, which includes DC and five Maryland counties, also employs thousands of people. (The Diocese of Arlington, encompassing 21 Virginia counties, is separate.)

"Cardinal Wuerl is much more hands-on in terms of really understanding the issues, the specific challenges and opportunities, that we face," says Ed Orzechowski, who was president of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington for the last 20 years.

After the massive snows of February 2010, Wuerl called Orzechowski to ask if Catholic Charities had the resources to cope with the storm. The archbishop told him he had the full financial support of the archdiocese—and then followed up with a \$200,000 check to cover snow removal and other staffing costs.

Wuerl has faced tougher decisions on the education front. Under his leadership and due to budget constraints, seven Catholic schools in DC were transitioned to public charter schools, which means they're no longer faith-based. Eleven other Catholic schools were closed.

Wuerl makes his home at a parish north of Dupont Circle. He rises at 5 am. He devotes 30 minutes daily to the treadmill and has adopted an early-news habit befitting his new locale: the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, New York Times, and Washington Times.

"So I can have indigestion before I eat," he says.

In person, Wuerl seems uninterested in discussing the high-profile events he has attended. He hosted the pope during his 2008 visit to Washington, which culminated in a Mass for 45,000 at Nationals Park. He took part in a prayer service at Washington National Cathedral the week of President Obama's inauguration in 2009. And he was House majority leader John Boehner's guest at the 2011 State of the Union address.

Wuerl is much more eager to talk about his latest pastoral letter, a call for renewed faith in a secular world.

"Young people are being told you need to have money, you need to have power, you need to have sex, you need to have drugs," Wuerl says. "This is what the entertainment industry is telling them. And many of them are saying there has to be more to life than that."

Wuerl's public fight against same-sex marriage

Thomas Reese, a senior fellow at the Woodstock Theological Center at Georgetown University, says Wuerl avoids the limelight—a trait that has won him fans. Catholics “see him as a priest, as their bishop, rather than as their political leader or as somebody who is trying to form public policy,” Reese says.

Church watchers say Wuerl prefers one-on-one consultation and behind-the-scenes lobbying on high-profile issues, from abortion and birth control to opposition to the ordination of women and gay marriage. He doesn’t use his platform to bully.

As a result, a feud with DC’s city council over gay marriage would have been Wuerl’s last desire. “One thing everybody would acknowledge about Don Wuerl is that he does not like a nasty public fight,” Allen says.

In 2009, the DC Council approved a bill allowing same-sex marriage. During public discussion of the proposal, Wuerl said he wanted an exemption for faith organizations so the archdiocese wouldn’t be forced to offer benefits to individuals in same-sex marriages; the Church maintains that marriage can be recognized only as the union of a man and a woman. Without an exemption, Wuerl suggested, Catholic Charities would no longer continue its contractual work with DC to provide services for needy residents.

“For us, the issue is what is the definition of marriage,” Wuerl says. “Because it has been universally accepted across human history and across all humanity. And our concern was if you change that, then you can change the definition of anything.”

Headlines criticized Wuerl for playing politics with a Church-backed social safety net. DC Council member Phil Mendelson, who supported the marriage bill, says the archdiocese could have been “more generous,” allowing a benefit provision to a second designee, regardless of that person’s relationship to the employee.

The council didn’t include an exemption when the bill passed. But rather than end its partnerships with DC, Catholic Charities assumed a policy that no new employees would receive spousal benefits.

The change was an earnest effort, Wuerl says, to bridge the divide between the archdiocese and the city—and, he notes, it’s a concession the local media failed to highlight.

The episode provided a crash course in how dialogue over hot-button issues is conducted in Washington. Wuerl feels the Church’s view was distorted by the media and says he learned not to rely on reporters and editors to get the message out. “We have to find ways of directly reaching our people,” he says.

During his tenure here, the marriage debate is the chapter for which he has received the most attention and for which he’d most appreciate a redo. “I thought it was a great opportunity lost,” he says.

One local politician applauds Wuerl's consistency. "Given all the issues around same-sex marriage and sexual orientation, I think he handled it as well as you can in a very, very difficult situation," says former DC mayor Anthony Williams, a Catholic who supports civil unions but also counts Wuerl as a friend.

Like Wuerl, Williams has been tagged by some as personally distant. He says the cardinal is a listener who is thoughtful and gracious. "I am someone who was accused of being standoffish and aloof," Williams says, "but you know, you come to know him, he's a very, very, very warm person. He'll meet a person and know their name."

Wuerl's journey to the Vatican

Wuerl might have angered the more liberal wing of the faithful during the marriage debate, but his stand allowing pro-choice politicians to receive Communion has frustrated conservatives. The cardinal's position on Communion is important in a city where powerful lawmakers such as House minority leader Nancy Pelosi and Massachusetts senator John Kerry are Catholic and pro-choice.

"It's the task of the priest in the pulpit to present the message clearly, completely—all the demands of the Gospel," Wuerl says, "and then, when he comes out of the pulpit, to meet people where they are and to try to help them get closer to Christ. Rather than deny the sacraments, I prefer to try to convince people."

Some anti-abortion activists disagree with Wuerl's stance. "To allow a rebellious sinner to come to the Communion table is outside the Church's historic teaching," says Troy Newman, president of Operation Rescue, an anti-abortion group based in Wichita.

Wuerl was elevated to cardinal last year along with just one other American official, Raymond L. Burke, prefect of the Vatican's supreme court and the former archbishop of St. Louis. While in Missouri, Burke became the first American bishop to say he would deny the Eucharist to then-presidential candidate Kerry. It was a lobbed bomb in critical swing-state territory and produced negative headlines for Kerry.

So Burke is a firebrand, Wuerl a conciliator. Their joint elevation illustrates a tacit awareness in Rome that effective leadership of the evolving US Church—unlike its more consistently conservative counterparts in Latin America and Africa—requires a balancing act. Wuerl appears to be in the forefront of compromise around the Communion conversation. The position has buoyed his reputation—here and nationally.

"I think the perception in the bishop's conference is that Don Wuerl represents the dead center," John Allen says. "It means he is seen as a fair broker, somebody who is respected and taken seriously by all sides."

Donald William Wuerl was born November 12, 1940, in Pittsburgh to Mary and Francis Wuerl. His mother died of cancer when he was almost four. His father remarried two years later, and his second wife, Kathryn, raised Wuerl and his three siblings.

Wuerl attended parish schools, and the family went to church each Sunday. Francis Wuerl, a weighmaster on the Pennsylvania railroad, would linger in the pews after the service ended. His son took note.

“He would see that we got to church, got to confession,” Wuerl says, “but it was clear he had his own prayer life, and it wasn’t something that he bantered about, it wasn’t something that he made very visible.”

The cardinal’s high-school yearbook notes this of the teenage Donald Wuerl: “Good natured, efficient and energetic; industrious student; born leader and orator.”

Wuerl’s first brush with Washington life was in the early 1960s when he studied at Catholic University, where he received bachelor’s and master’s degrees in philosophy. The nation was captivated by John F. Kennedy, its first Catholic President, and his beautiful young wife, Jackie. “It was a very exciting time,” Wuerl says.

From there, he headed to Rome to study. He was ordained in 1966 at St. Peter’s Basilica. After early assignments back home in Pittsburgh, Wuerl returned to Rome, where he spent a decade as secretary to Cardinal John Wright, who was prefect of the powerful Congregation for the Clergy. In that role, Wuerl found himself inside the 1978 conclave that elected Pope John Paul II; Wright was in a wheelchair, and Wuerl was permitted to escort him in and get him situated, though Wuerl wasn’t on hand for the balloting.

After Rome, Wuerl returned to Pittsburgh. But in 1985, he was assigned to be auxiliary bishop of Seattle—a move that proved the first major snafu in Wuerl’s otherwise smooth trajectory. It was there, perhaps, that Wuerl lost any taste for public conflict.

In Seattle, then-archbishop Raymond Hunthausen was drawing concern from the Vatican for allowing, as *People* magazine reported at the time, “a cathedral service for gay parishioners and permitting altar girls to serve during Mass.” Hunthausen was too liberal for leadership in the Holy See, and after an inquiry shepherded by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger—now Pope Benedict XVI—Wuerl was dispatched to Seattle. He was given authority over several critical areas, including marriage, the liturgy, and moral issues.

With an untenable tag team of bishops, the Seattle situation was covered coast to coast by newspapers and TV. It became a symbol of American dissatisfaction with the Vatican. Church leaders in the United States were newly grappling with social issues and a diversifying membership. The San Diego Union-Tribune asked: **WILL RIFT WITH ROME LEAD TO SEPARATE U.S. CATHOLIC CHURCH?**

With Wuerl in the awkward position of unwelcome Vatican enforcer, Hunthausen’s allies revolted. And as national attention mounted, Hunthausen’s power was restored; Wuerl was sent packing after 18 months. Having advocated unwaveringly for the Vatican’s position, though, he had earned his chits with Ratzinger.

“I was sent there because the Holy See felt there was a need for some redirection of some areas of ecclesiastical life,” Wuerl says. “And I keep reminding myself that any animosity directed to me wasn’t personal.”

“He certainly is the type of bishop that Benedict likes.”

Wuerl became bishop of Pittsburgh less than a year later, in 1988.

Almost immediately, he faced a problem at home. Revelations that a local priest, Father Anthony Cipolla, had molested an altar boy forced Wuerl to take a public position on abuse policy. Wuerl removed Cipolla from ministry and made the decision permanent after Cipolla refused psychiatric treatment—and when new details came to light of his earlier arrest for molesting a nine-year-old.

Cipolla maintained his innocence and appealed Wuerl’s decision to the Vatican. The Vatican’s highest court ordered Wuerl to reinstate Cipolla. But Wuerl instead demanded an unheard-of rehearing, saying the court didn’t have the police report involving his arrest. The case took more than two years to review, and ultimately Wuerl won out.

He found an ally in Ratzinger, then prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. “He just stood with me,” Wuerl recalls, “and eventually Pope John Paul II said this will be made right. It’s wrong and it will be made right.”

The pope eventually defrocked Cipolla, stripping him of his priestly powers. But some believe Wuerl ruffled feathers in bucking the Vatican’s initial decision—and that it might have cost him an earlier promotion.

“I’ve heard from several insiders that the case turned some influential people against him,” says Ann Rodgers of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. “A lot of people think that’s why he wasn’t elevated sooner.”

There’s always chatter in Church circles—practical or not—about the likelihood that a US archbishop might become pope. In those conversations, Wuerl is usually in the mix.

But by most accounts, an American—even one as versed in the ways of the Vatican as Wuerl—won’t serve in the top job. There is still a “very strong taboo against a superpower pope,” Allen says.

With the mandatory bishops’ retirement age of 75 looming for him in 2015, Wuerl’s service could end in Washington. But Allen believes he could be called again to Rome to head, for example, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith or the Congregation for the Clergy. Georgetown University’s Thomas Reese agrees: “He certainly is the type of bishop that Benedict likes—someone who is interested in theology, someone who is bright and prudent and recognizes the importance of religious education.”

Wuerl says he isn't looking that far down the road and shrugs off any pope talk. "I appreciate the affection that motivates that," he says. "It's unrealistic."

He expects the Church to tap leaders from the regions where it's growing for its next spiritual chief. He mentions Africa, Asia, and Latin and South America. He also dismisses some observers' suggestions that he could be instrumental in informally guiding the balloting process behind the scenes. A kingmaker, of sorts. He says the selection ultimately turns on the power of prayer.

Wuerl insists his future is in building the Church in the nation's capital, in putting aside politics to talk about faith.

"You have to sink roots quickly," he says of his Washington journey. "And it didn't take too long to come to love this Church. It's a wonderful place. Now this is my reference point for home."

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<https://www.washingtonian.com/2011/10/17/the-vaticans-man-in-washington/>

Much at stake for Francis in Vatican sex abuse moves

By Thomas C. Fox

National Catholic Reporter

January 21, 2014

For the first time in the decades-long church sex abuse scandal, senior Vatican officials last week appeared before an independent outside body charged with holding it responsible for protecting children.

They took a grilling in Geneva by the U.N.'s Committee on the Rights of the Child for the Vatican's alleged failure to abide by terms of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Vatican has long insisted it isn't responsible for abusive priests because they aren't employees of the Vatican, and they repeated the excuse last Thursday.

“Priests are not functionaries of the Vatican,” Archbishop Silvano Tomasi, the Vatican's U.N. ambassador in Geneva, told the committee. “Priests are citizens of their own states, and they fall under the jurisdiction of their own country.”

Survivor groups and human rights organizations again dismissed the excuses, reportedly showing the committee documents (it has long shared with others) revealing how Rome had discouraged bishops from reporting abusers to police.

Despite Pope Francis' heartfelt expressions of lament over priest sex abuse last week, the Geneva hearing suggests to date he does not understand the full magnitude of the related sex abuse issues, or, if he does, is yet unwilling or incapable of responding to it.

I so want Francis to succeed in his multiple reform efforts it is heartbreaking to think he might miss the ball on clergy sex abuse – and cover-up. (With the emphasis here on “cover-up.”)

It is the Vatican, or more specifically the pope, after all, who appoints, sustains, and relieves bishops. The larger clergy scandal from the outset has always involved the hierarchy, those clerics directly responsible to the pope. In case after case for decades they put institutional concerns, including their own interests, ahead of those of the children. This has been the situation throughout the world.

For these tragic actions and despite thousands of abuse cases, not one bishop has yet to spend a day behind bars. The bishops have not been held accountable. It is for this reason the Vatican in general, and Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict, specifically, have lost credibility among much of the faithful.

I don't want Francis to fall victim to the same institutional intransigence.

A brief look into U.S. church history, where the first public reports of clergy sex abuse surfaced, adds perspective and helps outline the scope of the challenge facing the pontiff.

The issues of the multi-layered abuse patterns were first placed before the U.S. bishops in a 92-page report way back in June 1985 at St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn.

I attended the meeting with Eugene Kennedy, a psychologist, longtime church commentator and NCR columnist. I remember waiting outside, sitting on a bench with Kennedy, expressing hope the report would ignite a fire beneath the bishops, even while suspecting -- as it turned out -- it would not.

Kennedy, reminded of our time in Collegeville together wrote in an email: "I recall Collegeville almost as a passing dream. The bishops were drifting off into a real dream and we understood they were really on the Titanic."

When it became apparent the bishops, in Collegeville, were only going to deal with the report in executive session, and after they played down the significance of the report, Kennedy and I both became gloomy. We both realized that the teaching authority of the U.S. bishops was certain to dive.

The report outlined the issues of priest abuse but aimed at avoiding episcopal negligence, a negligence that only continued to grow in the decades ahead as the hierarchy, from the local bishops to the Vatican, became ever more defensive at protecting their ranks – tossing laity, starting with children, to the winds.

Back in 1985 the study before the bishops referred to more than 100 lawsuits filed against the church in the U.S.

Among the insights in that 1985 document were clear statements that while help can be provided for abusive priests, there is "no hope" for a permanent "cure," that a bishop "should suspend immediately" any priest accused of sexual abuse when "the allegation has any possible merit or truth." It placed the responsibility directly in the laps of the bishops. They, of course, ignored the warnings, as some, incredibly to say, still seem to do so today.

Two priests, Fr. Michael Peterson and Dominican Fr. Thomas Doyle, and an attorney, F. Ray Mouton, were the authors of the prophetic report.

It was in January 1985 that Peterson, then director of St. Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Md.; Doyle, a canonist at the office of the papal nuncio in Washington, D.C.; and Mouton, a civil attorney representing a priest, Fr. Gilbert Gauthé, then charged with pedophilia, began their collaboration.

That collaboration continued over five months and resulted in the report, backed with more than 100 pages of supporting evidence. The report covered the civil, canonical and psychological aspects of priest sexual involvement with children.

The Catholic church, the three men wrote, faces "extremely serious financial consequences" and "significant injury" to its image as a result of the "sexual molestation of children by clerics,

priests, permanent deacons and transient deacons, non ordained religious, lay employees and seminarians.”

At the time the men finished the final draft of the report in June 1985, they noted more than \$100 million in claims had been made against just one diocese as a result of sexual contact between a priest “and a number of minor children.”

The report said the settlement for seven cases, including fees and expenses, had exceeded \$5 million, and that “the average settlement for each case was nearly \$500,000.” It estimated that “total projected losses for the decade” could rise to \$1 billion.

The men warned that newspaper reporters -- NCR was cited by name -- were already on to the story. NCR has stayed on the story since that time, often accused by the offending bishops -- most recently last year by our own Bishop Robert Finn here in Kansas City, Mo. -- of destroying and betraying the church.

“The potential exposure to the Catholic church ... is very great,” the 1985 report then stated.

The three men -- and repeated NCR editorials -- tried to cajole the bishops into taking action, begging them not to be defensive, pleading they view the scandal as a pastoral and not primarily legal challenge.

The landmark report urged the bishops to abandon their strategy of staying away from the media, warning, “In this sophisticated society a media policy of silence implies either necessary secrecy or cover-up.”

In 1992, Doyle again lamented, as he has countless times since, the failure of the bishops to take action on the abuse crisis. “Nothing happened,” he told a group of abuse victims at a gathering in October outside of Chicago. “Why the inaction? Why the denial?”

Doyle responded to his own questions: “To acknowledge the problem in its fullness would open the whole [clerical] system to critique,” he said. “It would weaken the presumed power base and strength of the hierarchy.”

That day, he characterized the church as having a “closed-in clerical culture” that attempts to maintain deep distinctions between clergy and laity. “We are somehow different, apart and above the laity,” he added, claiming that this separation had added to the crisis by keeping the clergy aloof from the consequences of their actions on victims and others.

Sadly, there seemed to be a fair measure of this same attitude in Vatican remarks made Thursday in Geneva.

Jason Berry, a Louisiana-based freelance reporter, first started writing about clergy sex abuse after in Lafayette, La., was indicted on charges of having molested 35 children. He covered the Gauthe trial for the National Catholic Reporter, contributed to other NCR investigations on the widening crisis, and wrote a book on the sex abuse issue, *Lead Us Not Into Temptation*.

Of course, no concrete actions came out of the Collegetown meeting. The bishops turned down the report's suggestion of a national intervention team (a doctor, a canonist and a lawyer) to respond to complaints in individual dioceses. "Dioceses prefer to respond through their own expert personnel, rather than a national team, due to factual and legal uniqueness of each accusation," a bishops' staff report once stated.

Today, as then, Rome's "offenders-are-not-Vatican-employees" defense does not hold water. One among many similar examples makes the point.

Again, looking back: In 1993, then-Bishop Donald Wuerl in Pittsburgh tried to oust from his diocese Fr. Anthony Cipolla, who had been accused by a teenage boy of molestation. Cipolla had ties to Mother Angelica's television ministry.

Cipolla appealed to the Vatican Signatura, the church's highest court. It ruled against Wuerl, telling him to reinstate Cipolla.

The Signatura's brief, later published in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, stated that a clinical analysis of Cipolla, overseen by Peterson at the St. Luke Institute, was based "on a mixed doctrine of Freudian pan-sexualism and behaviorism." It stated that the institute "is surely not a suitable institution apt to judge rightly about the beliefs and the lifestyle of a Catholic priest."

Wuerl persisted, and two years later, the Vatican court reversed itself and supported the decision to remove the priest.

The Vatican first spoke up against clergy sex abuse when Pope John Paul II issued a condemnation in 1993. At the time, he announced the formation of a joint study commission to address U.S. bishops' concerns about canonical problems in dealing with priest abusers.

Last month, Francis announced he would set up a special commission on the sexual abuse of children to advise him on ways to prevent abuse and provide pastoral care for victims and their families.

National Survivor Advocates Coalition responded that the work of the commission will be "a whitewash if there is no dedicated attempt to deal with those who covered up crimes, namely bishops, the Vatican, its staff and staffs in chanceries."

Survivor advocates again expressed the same sentiments to the U.N. committee last week.

<https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/much-stake-francis-vatican-sex-abuse-moves>

Cardinal Wuerl commissions child protection compliance coordinators and thanks them for ministry of keeping children safe

Catholic Standard

February 25, 2014

At a Jan. 15 Mass at the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land, Cardinal Donald Wuerl presided at the first annual Child Protection Compliance Coordinator Commissioning, where he blessed and commissioned 75 representatives from parishes and schools.

In his homily, the cardinal expressed gratitude to the child protection compliance coordinators for their service, and said the commissioning offered “a way of lifting up and making visible the importance of your responsibilities... Part of our task today is to see that every child that comes into our care is safe.”

Their efforts, Cardinal Wuerl said, ensure that children are welcomed “into God’s house and God’s family. You are there for them. It’s a beautiful ministry, a quiet ministry.”

The Archdiocese of Washington has had a written Child Protection Policy since 1986. One of the first such policies in the country, it has become a model for dioceses nationwide. The policy covers reporting, prevention and healing. It mandates reporting to civil authorities of cases of suspected abuse, education for children and adults to prevent and recognize abuse, and mandatory background checks for clergy, employees and volunteers who work with minors. The policy also requires the archdiocese to “offer compassionate and timely pastoral care to victims of child abuse, the victims’ immediate families and the affected faith communities.” An archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board of predominately lay experts advises on and monitors the archdiocese’s outreach and compliance with the policy.

For many years, the Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington has required that pastors designate one or more persons as child protection compliance coordinators to ensure that the parish and its school are in full compliance with archdiocesan child protection requirements.

Deacon Matt Houle, the director of the Office of Child and Youth Protection for the archdiocese, offered a welcome at the Mass. Before the cardinal’s commissioning at the end of the Mass, Deacon Houle said, “For the child protection activity of the Church, the cooperation of a great many people is needed, so that communities as well as individuals may know that children who are entrusted to our care are protected.”

The deacon praised the diligent efforts of child protection compliance coordinators and those who support them. “It is through the daily focused efforts of those who devote themselves to child protection, that the safest environments possible are provided to the most vulnerable among us, our children.”

During the commissioning, Cardinal Wuerl prayed that God will bless “those child protection coordinators, who so generously devote themselves to helping others. Give them strength and wisdom as they care for children; show them how to protect all children with patience and tenderness.”

Then the cardinal thanked them again for “your willingness to take on this ministry and responsibility.” He noted that one small piece of broken glass can draw attention away from the beauty of a stained glass window, and the compliance coordinators can help ensure that “the window remains whole” as the Church continues its outreach. “It’s important we stand together and know we are doing the best we can do to witness to His (Jesus’s) love,” Cardinal Wuerl said.

At a reception that followed in St. Francis Hall, several child protection compliance coordinators interviewed by the Catholic Standard reflected on their work.

“Cardinal Wuerl said it best. We’re bearing silent witness to protecting the children and youth of the Church,” said Cherryace Fields, the executive assistant to the president of Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington. “...This is important work, work that goes unsung. You’re on the front lines.”

Mary Portner, a parishioner of Sacred Heart in La Plata who serves as coordinator of youth ministry for a group of five parishes in Charles County, said, “It’s important we know that the people interacting with our kids are of good character and are good people, so we don’t have to worry about the safety of our children, so they can experience the beauty of our faith, and the love of Jesus.”

Sister Maria de Jesus Doliente Sarda, a member of the Servants of the Lord and the Virgin of Matara who serves as the director of religious education at St. James Parish in Mount Rainier, said the coordinators’ work is important because “we need to do everything that is in our hands to make sure the children are protected, and (make sure) the people who work with our children are people we can trust... The little that we can do can make a big difference in children’s lives.”

Addressing the coordinators, Deacon Houle said, “The Archdiocese of Washington extends a heartfelt thank-you. May the blessings of the Holy Spirit be on you always in guiding you in this most important work of protecting our children.” Washington Auxiliary Bishop Barry Knestout, who concelebrated the Mass, also greeted the coordinators at the reception and thanked them for their service.

In an interview, Cynthia DeSimone, the archdiocese’s new chancellor, said, “I admire the dedication and devotion each child protection compliance coordinator has to their parish and their children. Their work is invaluable to our archdiocese.”

Jia-Shieu OuYang, one of the coordinators for Our Lady of China Pastoral Mission in Rockville, said the work in ensuring that parishes comply with the archdiocese’s Child Protection Policy “builds confidence for the community and outside the community, that we’re taking actions, not just (making) empty promises.”

She found the training sessions very informative as a parent and praised the child safety educational programs for students, which are age-appropriate. “Being aware can help children look for signs and be careful,” she said.

Msgr. William English, a retired priest and former pastor of the archdiocese who has served on its Child Protection Advisory Board since it was founded, called the work of the coordinators “absolutely essential. It gives us security about the people volunteering and helping out... They (the coordinators) are very faithful.”

Elsy Zaldivar, the child protection compliance coordinator for St. Bernardine of Siena Parish in Suitland who also volunteers as the director of the religious education program there, said, “I take it very seriously to make sure our children are safe.”

The volunteer catechists in her parish’s program include 22 adults and about 10 teen assistants, and Zaldivar makes sure they are in compliance with the Child Protection Policy. The work, she said, is time consuming, but very rewarding in the end. “You’re working to protect the children of God,” she said.

Eloise Brown, the office manager at the rectory of St. Gabriel Parish in Washington who works to ensure that the staff and volunteers serving the youth ministries and programs there are in compliance with the child safety policy, said, “It’s a blessing to protect the vulnerable ones.”

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Cardinal-Wuerl-commissions-child-protection-compliance-coordinators-and-thanks-them-for-ministry-of-keeping-children-safe/2/27/5966>

Higher Power: Cardinal Donald Wuerl's New Vatican Job

By Michael Sean Winters

The Washingtonian

March 5, 2014

Three years ago, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Washington, tapped Monsignor John Enzler to take over Catholic Charities, the primary social-welfare arm of the archdiocese. The move took many by surprise. Catholic Charities helps not only Catholics but anyone in need, which last year meant treating more than 15,000 patients at its clinics and in physicians' offices (200-plus doctors donated some \$6.7 million worth of medical services to the poor last year), serving 5.5 million meals to the needy, and making more than 1,800 beds available every night, from shelters for the homeless to permanent housing for adults with disabilities.

Enzler is a beloved priest who has used his people skills to make his name as a successful pastor—and fundraiser—at two of Washington's most prestigious parishes: Our Lady of Mercy in Potomac and Blessed Sacrament in Chevy Chase DC. Administration of a multifaceted social-welfare agency wasn't on his résumé; he was more accustomed to baptisms and confessions than budgets and conference calls.

But Wuerl didn't want a bureaucrat. He was looking for a “pastor to the poor,” Enzler explains: “Cardinal Wuerl says that we have a moral obligation to take care of the poor. At the macro level, he looks for people who can do the work.”

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Ever since Pope Francis walked out on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica for the first time last March, Catholics and non-Catholics have been intrigued by his simple lifestyle, his frankness, and his exhortations to care for those in need. But as his papacy has progressed, the question for Vaticanologists has become how the new pontiff will give organizational heft to his rhetoric.

An answer came in December, when Francis named Wuerl to the Congregation for Bishops, a committee that recommends candidates to fill bishoprics in more than 5,000 dioceses around the world. The position—which he'll fill while continuing as archbishop of Washington—gives Wuerl a crucial voice in determining the next generation of Church leaders.

Just as the College of Cardinals had picked Francis, an Argentinean bishop known for his pastoral approach to diocesan management, the pope has entrusted the scouting of new bishops to Wuerl, the man who chose a pastor like Monsignor Enzler to run Catholic Charities. The key to advancement, insiders understood, would be to infuse even administrative functions with pastoral zeal.

That's not what the wider world took from Wuerl's appointment. The American whom Wuerl is replacing on the Congregation for Bishops is the ultraconservative former archbishop of St. Louis, Cardinal Raymond Burke. In that city, Burke built a reputation as the US church's most prominent culture warrior. He made front-page news during the 2004 presidential campaign by

saying that Senator John Kerry—the Democratic candidate and a Catholic—should be refused Holy Communion at Mass because of his pro-choice stance on abortion.

In the mainstream press, the switch was reported as a significant shift and a rebuke of Burke by Pope Francis, who wrote in his first official teaching document, *Evangelii Gaudium*, that the sacrament of Communion “is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak.”

But Burke and Wuerl have a history on the issue that gives Wuerl’s selection a personal tinge. Like most bishops, he counters Burke’s arguments about Communion that it’s not a priest’s job to arbitrate political positions through the Eucharist. Wuerl has said he discerns two approaches to reaching out to people: “One is the pastoral, teaching mode, and the other is the canonical [or legal] approach. . . . I believe if we teach our people, we will not have a problem with our politicians.”

But most bishops don’t have nearly as many Catholic politicians coming to their Communion rails, and Wuerl’s stance has made him a target for Burke’s criticism.

In March 2009, Burke gave a video interview to the pro-life activist Randall Terry. When Terry criticized Wuerl and Arlington’s bishop, Paul Loverde, for not denying Communion to pro-choice politicians, Burke said nothing in their defense.

Wuerl responded in an interview with AOL’s Politics Daily that withholding the Eucharist “wasn’t a way we convinced Catholic politicians to appropriate the faith and live it and apply it.” He dismissed politicizing the sacrament as “the new way now to make your point.”

More than a year later, when Pope Benedict XVI made both Burke and Wuerl cardinals at the same consistory at the Vatican, Wuerl reportedly reached out to Burke, suggesting that, whatever problems they’d had in the past, it was time they became friends. Burke, according to someone who observed the scene, rebuffed the overture.

Given their history, Wuerl’s appointment, the conservative political journal the American Spectator said, “deserves a special place in the annals of in-your-face papal politics.”

One can make too much of the politics of Wuerl’s new assignment. Popes don’t normally use staff decisions to settle personal scores. Nor should Wuerl’s promotion be interpreted as a triumph for Catholic progressives. He’s no firebrand, and only the most arch of archconservatives would consider him a liberal. Instead, he has a track record as a moderate intent on managing staff, reconciling budgets, and seeking compromise in a pastoral manner.

In May 2012, Georgetown University invited Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to speak at graduation just as Catholic hospitals and other religious institutions were fighting a provision of the Affordable Care Act mandating health-insurance coverage for birth control for all employees. Wuerl issued a statement criticizing the decision to select “a featured speaker whose actions as a public official present the most direct challenge to religious liberty in recent history.” But the kerfuffle didn’t prevent him from appearing last October at the kickoff of

the school's new Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life beside Georgetown president John DeGioia.

“Now, with Pope Francis, [the initiative] looks like an easy step,” says John Carr, director of the center. “But in the beginning, when prospects were uncertain, Cardinal Wuerl offered personal support for its mission and its location at Georgetown.”

Says Stephen Schneck, director of the Institute for Policy Research & Catholic Studies, a think tank at Catholic University: “Cardinal Wuerl is not afraid to criticize, but he's more likely to simply roll up his sleeves and work for whatever good can be achieved.”

If Wuerl is a signal to the Church, then, it may be that Francis is hoping the cardinal's tenure will be one of steadiness and seasoned decision-making. “It would be hard to name someone in our country who has a broader experience of the life of the Church,” says Bishop Blase Cupich of Spokane. “His opinion is held in high regard by his brother bishops because he has consistently shown that he has the capacity to prudently and objectively reflect on his experience.”

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It's a part Wuerl has played before. As a young priest, he studied in Rome and returned there to a post in the curia—the Church's central administration—after a stint as a parish priest in Pittsburgh, his hometown. But when Pope John Paul II wanted to rein in a provocatively liberal bishop of Seattle in 1985, he appointed Wuerl auxiliary, with the difficult job of acting as the bishop's Vatican minder.

As bishop of Pittsburgh, a seat he held from 1988 until coming to Washington in 2006, Wuerl was one of the first bishops to announce a “zero tolerance” policy for clergy sex abuse, even successfully battling a Vatican decision that ordered him to reinstate a priest he had suspended after the cleric was arrested for molesting a minor.

A moderate like Wuerl, and the bishops he chooses, may signal a change in how the Church relates to the nation. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, headquartered in Washington, has long been a prominent voice in politics. For most of its history, the group steered clear of partisanship, advocating for the poor, a move that aligned them with Democrats, but against abortion, which aligned them with Republicans. In the past ten years, however, the bishops have tilted to the right, insisting that issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage had priority over other subjects. Their partisan edge cost the bishops some of their cachet, especially among their natural allies in social-justice circles.

Wuerl—though he may not have Enzler's experience with rank-and-file parishioners—may restore some of the American Church's profile in terms of putting the disadvantaged first.

In Washington, from his relative remove as cardinal, Enzler says, Wuerl has already shown his concern: “He guarantees we have the resources we need, giving more than \$1 million from the annual Cardinal's Appeal. There is no micromanagement, just great commitment, great trust. He really supports our work.”

Enzler adds that Wuerl is proving himself more adept at hands-on ministry. “A year ago, we began a weekly program to serve dinner to homeless men and women who don’t get a lot of food at the shelters,” he says. The cardinal, who attends board meetings at Enzler’s headquarters on G Street, Northwest, across from the Martin Luther King Jr. library, has mingled with the 250 or so people who come to eat each week.

“Watching Cardinal Wuerl, seeing him greet the people, not dressed up in any regalia but as a simple priest, listening to them, wanting to be a part of their situation, it’s really impressive,” Enzler says. “He’s completely comfortable with the people who come for dinner.”

Now the cardinal wants to visit Food & Friends, the program that assists people with HIV and other illnesses. “He always asks me, ‘What’s next?’ “ Enzler says. “He wants to be a part of our work.”

Even as Wuerl moves higher in the Vatican’s sometimes remote hierarchy, he seems to have acquired, in Pope Francis’s phrase, the “smell of the sheep.”

<https://www.washingtonian.com/2014/03/05/higher-power-cardinal-donald-wuerls-new-vatican-job/>

Timeline for Archdiocese of Washington

Catholic Standard
September 24, 2014

1634 – English colonists land in Maryland at St. Clement’s Island, and Jesuit Father Andrew White celebrates the first Catholic Mass in the English-speaking colonies.

1731 – St. Francis Xavier Church built in Newtowne, Md., and it stands today as the oldest Catholic church in continuous use from the original 13 colonies.

1789 – Bishop John Carroll is elected as the first Catholic bishop of the new United States, heading the Diocese of Baltimore, which encompasses all 13 original states.

1789 – Bishop Carroll founds Georgetown College (later University) in Washington, the nation’s first Catholic institution of higher learning.

1794 – St. Patrick Parish established in Washington, the first Catholic parish in the new federal city.

1858 – St. Augustine Parish, the mother church for African-American Catholics in the nation’s capital, is founded by free men and women of color, including former slaves.

1860 – St. Ann’s Infant Asylum is established by the Daughters of Charity.

1861 – At the invitation of President Abraham Lincoln, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul found Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C.

1887 – The Catholic University of America, the national university of the Catholic Church in the United States, is founded in Washington.

1897 – Trinity College founded in Washington by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, becoming one of the nation’s first Catholic liberal arts colleges for women.

1922 – Catholic Charities of Washington is formed as a collaboration between the St. Vincent de Paul Society and a group of Catholic laymen.

1939 – Pope Pius XII establishes the Archdiocese of Washington, which is led by Archbishop Michael J. Curley and includes only the city of Washington.

1947 – The Archdiocese of Washington expands to include St. Mary’s, Charles, Calvert, Prince George’s and Montgomery counties in Maryland.

1948 – New Washington Archbishop Patrick O’Boyle begins working to integrate all the Catholic schools and parishes in the Archdiocese of Washington.

1951 – Archbishop Carroll High School opens for young men, becoming one of the first integrated schools in the nation’s capital.

1959 – The National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception – the largest Catholic church in North America – is dedicated in Washington.

1963 – Archbishop O’Boyle offers the invocation at the March on Washington, where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his famous “I Have a Dream” speech.

1963 – The nation mourns after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the United States’ first Catholic president. His Requiem Mass is held at the Cathedral of St. Matthew.

1963 – The Sisters of the Holy Cross found Holy Cross Hospital in Silver Spring, which will become one of Maryland’s largest hospitals.

1973 – Cardinal O’Boyle retires, and he is succeeded as archbishop of Washington by Archbishop William Baum.

1979 – During a pastoral visit to Washington, Pope John Paul II celebrates a Mass for an estimated 175,000 people on the National Mall.

1980 – Cardinal Baum is named to lead the Vatican’s Congregation for Catholic Education, and Cleveland Bishop James Hickey is named the archbishop of Washington.

1986 – The Archdiocese of Washington adopts its Child Protection Policy, one of the first in the nation.

1986 – Archbishop Hickey dedicates the Gift of Peace convent in Washington, where Mother Teresa’s Missionaries of Charity sisters care for people with AIDS.

1997 – Cardinal James Hickey establishes the Center City Consortium of Catholic schools, as part of a broader “Faith in the City” program.

2000 – To mark the Great Jubilee Year, more than 20,000 local Catholics attend Eucharistic Congress 2000 at the MCI Center in Washington.

2001 – Archbishop Theodore McCarrick is installed in January as the new archbishop of Washington, succeeding Cardinal Hickey.

2001 – Cardinal McCarrick names Jane Belford as the Archdiocese of Washington’s first lay chancellor and the first woman to hold that post.

2006 – Pope Benedict XVI appoints Bishop Donald Wuerl of Pittsburgh as the new archbishop of Washington, succeeding Cardinal McCarrick.

2007 – Archbishop Wuerl convenes a Convocation on Education, beginning a widespread consultative process to strengthen and sustain Catholic schools for the future.

2008 – Pope Benedict XVI's pastoral visit to Washington includes a Papal Mass for more than 50,000 people at the new Nationals Park.

2014 – To mark the Archdiocese of Washington's 75th anniversary, Cardinal Wuerl convokes the first Archdiocesan Synod, which charts a course for future outreach in the key areas of worship, education, community, service, stewardship and administration.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Archdiocese/Article/Timeline-for-Archdiocese-of-Washington/2/27/6180>

Child Abuse Prevention Month: Protecting the Innocent and Vulnerable Among Us

By Cardinal Donald Wuerl

The Cardinal's Blog – Seek First the Kingdom

April 13, 2015

Children are precious. Their simplicity, their sense of wonder and enthusiasm, their laughter at play are all infectious. Their innate way of receiving and giving tenderness, their way of seeing reality with a trusting and pure gaze, cannot fail to touch our hearts and fill us with hope for tomorrow, Pope Francis recently observed.

Children are truly a gift. Yet, as with all else in this fallen world, young people are subject to the human condition. Some are raised in poverty and poor living conditions despite the best efforts of their parents. But others have had grave wrongs perpetrated against them, including physical, mental, emotional and/or sexual abuse.

To draw attention to this evil and what we can do about it, April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. During this month, government agencies, community groups, and churches are encouraged to work together to share child abuse and neglect prevention strategies and promote the well-being of children and families. This responsibility belongs to everyone as a matter of charity and justice, and the Archdiocese of Washington is strongly committed to child safety in the Church and throughout society.

“Concern for the child, even before birth, from the first moment of conception and then throughout the years of infancy and youth is the primary and fundamental test of the relationship of one human being to another,” said Saint John Paul II in an address to the United Nations (*Familiaris Consortio*, 26). We can all do our part to protect the dignity of all human life and ensure our children are in safe environments at home, at school, in our neighborhoods, and at church.

Our local Church has long been pro-active in protecting children. Since 1986, the archdiocese has had a stringent written policy on child protection, one of the most comprehensive of any organization – public or private – entrusted with the care of children in Maryland or the District of Columbia. This policy mandates reporting of suspected abuse to civil authorities, education for children and adults, and background checks for clergy, employees and volunteers who work with minors. Also included is information on healing for those harmed and what to do if there is an allegation. These efforts are overseen by a Child Protection Advisory Board of predominantly lay experts.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has a variety of child abuse prevention resources on its website. The archdiocese has also developed a series of safety tips, including advice on Internet safety, sexting, healthy teen relationships, and bullying. Children in archdiocesan schools and religious education programs are also taught how to recognize abuse and protect themselves.

Our efforts to combat child abuse begin with ourselves, with our own families in our own homes, including our spiritual family. The Catechism reminds parents they have an obligation to love and care for the children that are entrusted to them by our heavenly Father (CCC 2221-31). Likewise, the Church that is our Mother has an obligation toward our little ones.

“Families need to know that the Church is making every effort to protect their children. They should also know that they have every right to turn to the Church with full confidence, for it is a safe and secure home,” Pope Francis has emphasized. Most especially, “everything possible must be done to rid the Church of the scourge of the sexual abuse of minors and to open pathways of reconciliation and healing for those who were abused.”

Being most vulnerable, our young people require us to care for them and protect them from harm. Child Abuse Prevention Month calls our attention to this obligation in charity and justice. Let us all be vigilant in helping to provide a safe environment for all children and to help those who are victims of abuse find healing.

<http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2015/04/child-abuse-prevention-month-protecting-the-innocent-and-vulnerable-among-us/>

Archbishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis resigns after charges of sex abuse coverup

By Abby Ohlheiser and Michelle Boorstein

The Washington Post

June 15, 2015

Ten days after prosecutors charged the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis with mishandling repeated complaints related to clergy sex abuse, the archbishop and another top bishop there resigned Monday in a rare public fall for U.S. church officials.

Archbishop John Nienstedt and Auxiliary Bishop Lee Piché were not charged individually in the case and said they were stepping down to remove distractions from the archdiocese as it faces a crisis.

“In order to give the Archdiocese a new beginning amidst the many challenges we face, I have submitted my resignation as Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis to our Holy Father, Pope Francis, and I have just received word that he has accepted it,” Nienstedt said in a statement. “My leadership has unfortunately drawn attention away from the good works of His Church and those who perform them.”

Piché’s brief statement also said he felt his presence was “getting in the way” of healing.

The Most Rev. Bernard A. Hebda will serve as apostolic administrator of the archdiocese until Pope Francis appoints a new archbishop.

The dramatic resignations came five days after Pope Francis approved a new high-level body at the Vatican specifically aimed at holding accountable bishops who fail to deal with abusers. Advocates for abuse survivors and Catholic law experts said the new body was a major step toward holding leadership responsible. Very few bishops have left their positions over charges of sexual abuse coverup.

In April, the Vatican accepted the resignation of Kansas City, Mo., Bishop Robert Finn, the only U.S. bishop to be criminally convicted of covering up abuse.

Earlier this month, Minnesota prosecutors charged the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis over its handling of clergy abuse claims. They said church leaders failed to protect children from unspeakable harm and “turned a blind eye” to repeated reports of inappropriate behavior by a priest who was later convicted of molesting two boys, the Associated Press reported.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi told the AP that prosecutors didn’t yet have enough evidence to charge any individuals in the case. The archdiocese itself faces six gross misdemeanor counts in connection to the abuse.

Curtis Wehmeyer, a former priest who is now serving a five-year prison term, was convicted of sexually abusing two boys in 2010, the Minneapolis Star-Tribune notes. He was pastor at the

Blessed Sacrament Church in St. Paul at the time. Wehmeyer also faces similar charges in Wisconsin.

On Monday, the Vatican declined to say whether Nienstedt and Piché had been forcibly removed or had stepped down by choice. Their resignations were offered under a segment of canon law that says a leader “who has become less able to fulfill his office because of ill health or some other grave cause is earnestly requested to present his resignation from office.” A spokesman characterized the resignations as the church having “now turned the page on a very difficult moment.”

Anne Barrett Doyle of BishopAccountability.org, which tracks abuse cases, said Monday that the Minneapolis clerics were “low-hanging fruit” and that Pope Francis must clarify why they left office.

“The last three popes have removed bishops for this,” she said. “But no one has made an explicit statement saying this is the reason. That kind of confirmation in light of last week’s [announcement about the new tribunal] is really important. We can’t continue to have popes staying mum when bishops are removed.”

Nienstedt had led the archdiocese since 2008. According to its Web site, the archdiocese ministers to 825,000 Roman Catholics in the greater Twin Cities area.

Washington’s archbishop, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, one of Francis’ closest U.S. confidants, said Monday that the resignations were a tribute to the pope – and that the fact no one had been explicitly punished was just normal face-saving that happens everywhere in U.S. culture.

“I think this is a great tribute to Pope Francis.. the church has responded clearly and directly,” Wuerl said at an event about church-union relations, where he was asked at a news conference about the resignations. “I wish that one thing that would come out of this would be for the wider community to say: ‘That’s a good example of how to go about things.’ [That] we’d have in our government schools, government operations the same accountability, I’d hope we’d require what we see modeled in what the church has learned in this sad experience.”

Asked if he would prefer to see leaders explicitly removed for their failure to stop abuse – rather than allowing them to resign without any admission of guilt – Wuerl said the church was just doing what other institutions do.

“We see that all the time, at levels of government when someone leaves, there is always some proviso made that the person _ everybody understand what’s going on but that the person voluntarily resigns is a recognition that now they understand how significant this is,” he told a news conference. “My point is, I’d love to see the example of the church now become normative in the whole public domain, hospitals, to see that same zero tolerance...We’d be more than happy to offer that.”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/06/15/archbishop-of-st-paul-and-minnesota-resigns-after-charges-of-sex-abuse-coverup/?utm_term=.73cad0590551

Office coordinates efforts at keeping children safe

By Richard Szczepanowski

Catholic Standard

August 25, 2015

With a stringent written Child Protection Policy, a Child Protection Advisory Board that reports directly to Cardinal Donald Wuerl, and extensive training for adults in how to protect children, the Archdiocese of Washington “is constantly at work to make sure our children are safe,” said the Archdiocese of Washington’s director of Child and Youth Protection.

“It is important... to make sure that all who come into our schools be compliant with our child protection policies,” said Courtney Chase, who for the past year has been the archdiocesan director of Child and Youth Protection. “It is a constant work to make sure that everybody is on board (with child protection policies) and to make sure our children are safe.”

Chase said that the archdiocese has had a written Child Protection Policy for almost 30 years. The policy mandates “a thorough background check for all employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children,” Chase said.

“We do two forms of background checks – electronic background checks and fingerprinting – on employees, clergy, volunteers and anyone else who works with our kids,” she said. “Everyone is put through the same rigorous measure to make sure our kids are safe.”

She noted that “there are child protection coordinators on-site in every parish and every school to execute these background checks.”

Every year, Cardinal Wuerl celebrates a Mass and presides at a commissioning ceremony for the child protection coordinators who serve at parishes and schools in the archdiocese.

The Child Protection Policy also mandates the reporting of allegations to civil authorities, assisting those who have been harmed, and extensive education and training on how to prevent and identify mistreatment of children and youth.

“We do have a very extensive victim assistance program, therapy resources and extensive safe environment training programs,” Chase said. “We take this (child protection) so seriously that those who are not compliant cannot participate in our schools and other programs.”

Chase added that child protection programs are not just for young people attending Catholic schools.

“We are involved in all aspects of that involve children – schools, religious education, CYO, parish activities, retreats, anything,” she said. “Parents can be assured their children are safe because we are making such positive strides.”

The archdiocesan policy also requires anyone who has substantial contact with children to attend a Protecting God’s Children for Adults workshop. These child protection education workshops

are offered in English and Spanish throughout the year in various locations throughout the archdiocese.

Children in archdiocesan schools and religious education programs also are taught how to recognize abuse and how to protect themselves.

Chase said her office is always on call “to offer guidance and resources and insights on how to deal with such a tender subject as this.”

“We get calls and visits from school administrators, parents, teachers, coaches, volunteers, even young children making sure they understand signs of possible abuse and the proper protocols that they must follow,” Chase said. “Our phones are buzzing and we are always open to discuss how to be proactive in the classroom, in the parish and CYO.”

She noted that her office is “100 percent transparent in what we do” and is audited each year. The results of that audit are published annually in the Catholic Standard. The archdiocesan Child Protection Advisory Board monitors also compliance with child protection efforts.

“We are not afraid to address the problem and help,” said Chase, who added that her office, and the child protection coordinators at schools and parishes, are on the front lines of protecting children. “We want everyone to feel comfortable and we are always here to help.”

Chase was appointed to her post last August. She has two master’s degrees – one in social work and one in business administration. Previously, she was an investigator for the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services and she also served as director of counseling at Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac.

In addition to the efforts of the Child and Youth Protection Office, Chase said, “it is critical that parents know what is going on.”

“Part of keeping their child safe is for parents to be present and involved,” she said. “Parents must have open lines of communication because they have the absolute right to know what is going on with their child.”

The Archdiocese of Washington makes resources and information about protecting children available online www.adw.org/childprotection. There, parents will find information on the archdiocese’s child protection efforts, safety tips, how to recognize Internet and cyber bullying and other information.

The phone number for the Child and Youth Protection Office is 301-853-5328. Chase said, “We want everyone to feel comfortable to talk to our office because we are all working to keep kids safe.”

<http://cathstan.org/Content/Mobile-Home/Mobile/Article/Office-coordinates-efforts-at-keeping-children-safe/-5/-5/6758>

‘Spotlight’ portrayal of sex abuse scandal is making the Catholic Church uncomfortable all over again

By Michelle Boorstein

The Washington Post

November 9, 2015

“Spotlight,” a new film about the Catholic clergy abuse scandal’s explosion in 2002, begs the question: How are things different in 2015?

Dozens of U.S. church leaders have in the past few days been offering answers in the form of public statements, with some primarily focusing on the survivors and others casting the scandal as fully in the past and framing the church as the leader today in a society that hasn’t fully dealt with the problem.

“Spotlight, which began playing in U.S. cities Nov. 6, tells the story of Boston Globe investigative journalists who broke the story. (The Globe’s editor at the time was Marty Baron, now executive editor of The Washington Post)

The range of views in the new statements – which follow a memo of talking points the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ sent to its dioceses in September — show the way the church still wrestles with how to tell its own story.

The movie “looks back at this historical past – 15 years and more as it dramatizes a newspaper investigation into abuse that occurred in the Boston area,” Washington Archbishop Donald Wuerl wrote Nov. 2. “My wish is that other entities, like the public school systems, would attempt to do what the Church has done and offer the same level of protection to children in their care as we do.”

In the first line of a piece on “Spotlight” this weekend, Francesco C. Cesareo, chairman of the USCCB’s National Review Board, also expressed the view that the Catholic Church’s problems with sexual abuse echo those of society as a whole.

“Sexual abuse of minors is a problem that affects many institutions in our society,” wrote Cesareo, head of the body charged with making sure the church enforces the rules it created after the scandal exploded. “In 2002, the Catholic Church recognized that it was not immune to this issue.”

Survivor advocates have bristled in the past when church leaders have declared the abuse crisis in Catholicism over, or have tried to remove focus from the institution itself. When Pope Francis this summer met in Philadelphia with survivors and included some people whose perpetrators were outside the church, many survivors who spoke out were angry at what they saw as a diluting of responsibility.

Other statements, which were mostly from bishops, showed the lingering impact of the crisis and suffering of survivors.

“The sin and crime of sexual abuse sadly still happens. And while failing to report on or remove an offender is rare in comparison with past practice, it too still happens, and when it does a shadow is cast on the Church’s efforts to restore trust and to provide a safe environment,” wrote Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels. “May God have mercy on us and help us.”

Researchers agree that the landscape today is dramatically different from the era “Spotlight” depicts. The Catholic Church now spends tens of millions of dollars each year on child protection efforts — and spends roughly twice as much annually now as it did a decade ago, according to the USCCB’s annual reports. The number of new credible allegations is one-third of what it was a decade ago. And with clergy sex abuse scandals now blowing up in other countries, the U.S. church is considered a global leader in prevention efforts.

Some church officials are so sure of their prevention systems that last week Terry Donilon, the spokesman for the Boston archdiocese, seemed surprised when a columnist for the *The Boston Globe* asked him whether clergy sexual abuse was still a problem in the archdiocese. There is “zero abuse” going on today — “none,” he told the *Globe*.

Yet new scandals continue to surface. In 2011 a Philadelphia grand jury accused the archdiocese of not stopping abusers and said more than three dozen priests credibly accused of abuse or inappropriate behavior towards minors remained in ministry. This spring two bishops resigned in St. Paul-Minneapolis shortly after criminal charges were entered against the archdiocese for allegedly not removing a priest despite repeated complaints of misconduct.

Prominent survivors — including one on a special commission created by Pope Francis — have continued to criticize the church for spending millions in court against victims, including in statehouses where the church fights the lifting of statutes of limitations.

Last week the *National Catholic Reporter* reported it found the sex abuse crisis has cost the U.S. church \$4 billion in the past 65 years, more than \$1 billion higher than the commonly-quoted figure. The site also quoted a new academic study, in the *Journal of Public Economics*, that argues the scandal continues to cost the church \$2.36 billion per year in charitable giving.

The impact on the church is complex. Polling by Pew Research shows that one-third of Catholics in 2013 ranked the abuse crisis the church’s most important problem, yet a tiny percent of those who left Catholicism cited it as the reason when asked in an open-ended way.

And the concept of the crisis changes over time, as the most heavily-hit generations age. In “*American Catholics in Transition*,” a book written by three sociologists of Catholicism, 7 percent of Catholics said they personally knew people abused by a priest. The number drops to 3 percent when asked of Millennials.

When the scandal broke in 2002, it was common for pundits and even some Catholics to point fingers at the church, hypothesizing that celibacy and gay priests were causes of the scandal. Since then, sex abuse scandals have gone public everywhere from the Boy Scouts to Orthodox Judaism, and stories surface constantly about abuse within families. Some Catholic leaders have

argued that it was just the first, biggest institution where the phenomenon appeared, and that the problem is no better in other parts of society.

But this approach can be controversial.

Terry McKiernan, founder of a Boston-based abuse-tracking group bishopaccountability.org, said he doesn't see child sex abuse as necessarily more prevalent in the Catholic Church. But he believes the reaction in the new statements about "Spotlight" reflect an ongoing problem.

"What if they had responded in a searching way? A radical way? Because there is so much left to do," he said. "And I'd prefer they not take credit for something they did so reluctantly. It's not something they innovated, they were forced into it."

The statements follow the memo to dioceses from the USCCB's office on child and youth protection. It warned staff who work with abuse survivors to be ready with support because the movie may remind survivors (in society, not just from clergy) of past trauma. At the same time, the memo urged church workers to create a communications strategy — including "speaking points for homilies" — and suggested reminding Catholics of the enormous changes that have been made since the early 2000's.

The memo opened with concern about how the movie will be perceived.

"In our experience, Catholics and others will take the movie as proof of what is happening today, not what happened in the past. Do not let past events discourage you. This is an opportunity to raise the awareness of all that has been done to prevent child sexual abuse in the Church. There is much good news to share," it read.

In an interview, Deacon Bernie Nojadera, executive director of the child protection office, framed the film as an opportunity.

The memo was put together so dioceses could "be prepared, because victims may see it, and it could trigger things, and we need to be ready," Nojadera said. Even though the movie is based in the past, "the pain of that is still very present, very real. In a way the movie is helping the church to remember, and to remind the church this is a mission they are going to be on for a long, long time."

The memo cites church data showing the steady decline in number of accusations since the early 2000's, but Nojadera said the numbers may hide abuse that remains uncovered.

"It's like an iceberg; that's what we see above. Lord knows how many are suffering or in pain," he said. "The data we have is just our marker for what we have."

Multiple dioceses issued statements using the words suggested by the USCCB memo: "We apologize for the grave harm that has been inflicted on you. Words alone cannot express our sorrow, shame and disappointment. So, it is our prayer and hope that through our actions you will find the healing you so richly deserve."

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/11/09/spotlight-portrayal-of-sex-abuse-scandal-is-making-the-catholic-church-uncomfortable-all-over-again/?utm_term=.9118b9a51bd9

The pope's man in Washington

By David Gibson

Religion News Service

December 28, 2015

Cardinal Donald Wuerl is an eminently approachable churchman, and unfailingly polite, yet the archbishop of Washington is hardly the type to wear his emotions on his sleeve.

So it surprised even Wuerl at how moved he was when he hand-delivered his official letter of resignation to Pope Francis' representative to the U.S. on Nov. 12. That was Wuerl's 75th birthday, the date every bishop is required to submit his request for retirement to the pontiff.

"Now if the Holy Father were to accept it tomorrow, I would be well-prepared to take time to write, to read, to pray a lot more," Wuerl said in a reflective moment during an interview with RNS a few days after the milestone.

But don't wave goodbye just yet.

Although Wuerl himself is characteristically reserved about his future, church sources say Francis likely won't accept his resignation for another year or maybe two: Wuerl is far too valuable to the pope where he is in his high-profile job in Washington, and in particular on half a dozen Vatican bodies. "One of the world's most influential bishops," as The Washington Post has called him.

The most critical of those Roman posts is on the Vatican Congregation for Bishops, where Wuerl is one of 30 churchmen who vet candidates for the pope to name as bishops and archbishops in thousands of dioceses around the world.

More important for the 65 million-member U.S. church, Wuerl is one of just two Americans on that congregation -- the other, retired Cardinal William Levada, will cycle off when he turns 80 in June.

Along with Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, a member of the pontiff's nine-member personal advisory body, Francis relies heavily on Wuerl's counsel given that the Argentine pontiff has little familiarity with the U.S. (His trip here in September began with a stop in the nation's capital -- another feather in Wuerl's biretta).

Moreover, when Francis named Wuerl to the bishops' congregation in December 2013 he also removed another American and longtime curial official, Cardinal Raymond Burke, a vocal culture warrior who has been seen as a leader in the opposition to Francis' reformist agenda.

Burke is no fan of Wuerl's, either, and has long been viewed as a hard-line critic of Wuerl's more pastoral approach on a range of hot-button issues; Wuerl's efforts to make peace with

Burke some years ago were reportedly rebuffed, and Burke's hardcore fans were not in a forgiving mood when Wuerl effectively replaced him in the key post.

Vatican insiders say Wuerl's influence in bishops' appointments has already been seen in the pope's surprise choice last year of Archbishop Blase Cupich to head the prominent Chicago archdiocese, as well as in a number of other recent and pending picks that are helping Francis shape the future of the American church in a more pastoral and moderate mold.

But that shift will also take time, another seven years or so, by one calculation, until Francis will have named more than half the world's bishops and cardinals -- that is, if the pope, who turned 79 a week before Christmas, remains in office that long.

While that process moves ahead, Wuerl can also perform another useful role as a kind of mediator in a U.S. hierarchy that has grown increasingly fractious as the more than 200 active bishops struggle to figure out whether, and how much, they can shift their long-standing culture war priorities to the more traditional social justice agenda favored by the pontiff.

That strain was never more in evidence than during November's annual meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore, when several prelates clashed openly over adjusting their political priorities to line up more closely with the pope's approach.

In a classic Wuerl moment, the Washington archbishop stepped to the microphone and with his characteristically measured tone advised the bishops to take a centrist course, acknowledging that the voter guide they were debating could be better but that they had to have something in time for next year's presidential campaign. "I would not want the perfect to become the enemy of the good," Wuerl told his colleagues in an effort to cool tempers and provide a rationale for moving ahead with what they had.

In the end, the revised voter guide was adopted by a 210-21 vote, with 5 abstentions. "There is a reason Wuerl may be the most respected member of the conference and even if one disagrees with him on this issue or that ... Wuerl's combination of intellectual power and pastoral sensibility is remarkable," wrote Michael Sean Winters, a columnist for the National Catholic Reporter.

Wuerl is "the center of our conference," Seattle Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, who has known Wuerl for 40 years, said in a new biography of the cardinal.

But the most important role in this final chapter of Wuerl's long career may go beyond any of these other more "political" considerations.

What's really at stake for Francis, and the church -- especially as conservative opposition to his reforming ways has at times reached a boiling point -- is essentially immersing Francis' innovative pontificate into the river of tradition that sustains and unites Catholicism even as it moves forward.

Connecting Francis to the church's past can reassure the right wing about Francis' orthodoxy (as far as that will ever be possible) and can ensure that the pope's focus on an openness to the world and pastoral flexibility to the flock are part of the church's future even after this pontiff leaves the scene.

Few are as well-positioned as Wuerl to advance that goal.

He has lived through seven papacies and seen one council up close, has been in two conclaves and numerous synods -- global meetings of bishops at the Vatican -- and he spent years studying in Rome and working in the Curia. He has been a diocesan bishop and a papal adviser, and he is both deeply orthodox and committed to making the church more open and pastoral. It's a paradoxical mix that allows critics on the left to dismiss him as an ambitious "company man" and critics on the right to rip him as a doctrinal squish.

Yet Wuerl is, in short, a lot like Francis, even though the two seem to differ so dramatically in temperament and background: the Latin American pope with little Roman experience who loves to press the flesh and talk off the cuff, and the Vatican-savvy North American cardinal, friendly but formal, impeccably dressed, and disciplined and organized to the point that he always seems to speaking in crafted paragraphs, even in casual conversation.

Between reforms and 'aberrations'

Born in Pittsburgh in 1940, Donald Wuerl was one of four children in a devout Catholic family where faith was "the frame of reference." Wuerl's father worked nights weighing freight cars for the Pennsylvania Railroad, a job that "required hard work, precision and organizational skills, all traits that Francis Wuerl passed to his middle son," as Ann Rodgers and Mike Aquilina write in their biography of Wuerl, "Something More Pastoral."

Despite the seeming stability of that era, momentous transitions were just ahead, for the Catholic Church and for the world.

Pius XII was the pope of Wuerl's childhood, but John XXIII (1958-1963) was the pope during Wuerl's undergraduate days at Catholic University of America in Washington. It was John who recognized that the church needed an "aggiornamento," as the Italians say, an updating, and he convened all the world's bishops in 1962 to begin the Second Vatican Council, a three-year re-examination of the church's teachings and way of doing ministry.

Wuerl landed in Rome as a seminarian just as the council was getting underway. He points to an assistant pastor, the Rev. Joseph Bryan, who worked at his home parish of St. Mary of the Mount, for first inspiring him to become a priest. And Wuerl's brains and talent quickly led his superiors to send him to finish his seminary studies at the North American College in Rome overlooking the Vatican.

"It was an extraordinarily exciting time," Wuerl says. The council's reforms and opening to the world profoundly shaped his outlook and became the touchstone that he constantly refers to -- as does Francis, who was studying to be a Jesuit priest in Argentina at the same time.

But the openings at Vatican II were also controversial.

Wuerl recalls one of his university professors, disturbed that John XXIII would dare to convene a council, warning the future priests “that even the pope can lead the church astray.” It’s a memory that would often come to mind for Wuerl in this current pontificate. “There was a feeling that somehow because he [Pope John] called a council and seemed to be so open to those who in previous pontificates were not all that welcome, that somehow his orthodoxy was questioned.”

And in fact, the council was followed by a period of great upheaval and experimentation, as many Catholics, some feeling suddenly freed of age-old strictures and customs, either left the church or stayed and tried to push the reform agenda even further.

They often went too far for Wuerl, who, after just two years as a priest in a parish back in Pittsburgh, returned to Rome when Pittsburgh’s bishop at the time, John Wright, was made a cardinal by Pope Paul VI and named to head the Vatican department overseeing the world’s clergy.

The decade of the 1970s that Wuerl spent in the Vatican as Wright’s secretary was a remarkable experience but also a time of “so many aberrations,” as Wuerl says, when even reform-minded prelates such as Wright -- who was later ripped by liberals for seeming to revert to conservatism -- saw how “things actually could go astray.”

“Even though he (Wright) was considered by many to be a very conservative defender of the faith, I found him to be an example of being so immersed in the tradition of the faith that he was comfortable seeing its development,” Wuerl says, providing a description that he could apply to himself.

Wuerl recalled Wright’s telling him how he met with Pope Paul one day amid all the tumult of the time and asked the pope, in near-exasperation, “What are we to do with all of this confusion?” The pontiff responded calmly: “You know the gospel. So all we can do is say it, and repeat it, and repeat it again.”

It was an answer that struck Wuerl, and stuck with him: “I’ve kept that as my own personal mantra.”

In fact, Wuerl has always seen himself as a teacher of the Catholic faith, a core self-definition that kept him centered -- and connected to the church’s power centers -- through the turbulent aftermath of Vatican II, and then through the course correction that came with the election of the more doctrinally conservative John Paul II in 1978, who was then succeeded on his death by the theologically rigorous Benedict XVI in 2005.

(A historical note: Because Cardinal Wright was so frail at the conclave of October 1978 -- he would be dead a year later -- Wuerl was allowed in to assist him, one of three non-cardinals permitted inside the secret election in the Sistine Chapel. Wuerl’s next conclave, and the only one in which he had a vote, was the most recent one, in 2013.)

‘The unwanted bishop’

For Wuerl, it’s all about “balance” -- a favorite word -- and remaining in the center in order to push for change. “The most important thing in life has to be your love of Jesus, but Jesus in his church, and being open to where is the Spirit moving us. The Spirit moved the council; the Spirit continues to move the church.”

For critics, however, that framing could come off as a rationalization for hierarchical loyalism, a label that would brand Wuerl in 1985.

That’s when John Paul II, in his campaign to reinforce doctrinal orthodoxy in the American church, made Wuerl a bishop and sent him to Seattle with a special brief to rein in the liberal ways of Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen.

Hunthausen was at the time the iconic progressive U.S. churchman: He had moved out of the bishop’s mansion and drove around the sprawling archdiocese in an old Volkswagen, and one year he refused to pay half of his income taxes to protest the U.S. stockpiling of nuclear weapons.

But it was Hunthausen’s perceived doctrinal laxity that disturbed Rome. He questioned the ban on women’s ordination and let gay Catholic groups hold liturgies in the cathedral; he promoted general absolution of sins -- the church prefers individual confession -- and wanted to allow divorced and remarried Catholics to take Communion.

John Paul’s solution to the Hunthausen problem was to make Wuerl a bishop and send him to Seattle, stripping Hunthausen of authority in several key areas and giving those powers to Wuerl.

It was an unprecedented move by the Vatican, a humiliation for Hunthausen -- and not much fun for Wuerl, the good soldier cast in the role of the bad guy. “The unwanted bishop,” as Rodgers and Aquilina call him in their chapter on the controversy.

Wuerl was 45 at the time, and while he wound up spending just over a year in Seattle, it was by all accounts a searing experience. Even now, 30 years later, Wuerl recalls the episode gingerly, in measured tones. He says Seattle did have real problems and insists his mission was “an institutional issue.”

The move was “never personal” between him and Hunthausen, he says, and he still telephones the now 94-year-old retired archbishop -- “a person of great integrity,” Wuerl has called him — to check in.

But Wuerl acknowledges the hostility he faced, and says he learned from that experience that “if you’re going to work with people you’re going to have to get to know them. ... You’re going to have to listen. You have to invite people into the discussion with you, and you have to go to where they are to be part of that discussion.”

‘You have to express your convictions’

It was a lesson that came in handy when, to Wuerl’s relief, he was made bishop in 1988 of his old hometown diocese of Pittsburgh.

“It was a joy,” says Wuerl. But also a huge challenge.

The heavy industry that had anchored the community was tanking, along with the U.S. economy. During Wuerl’s early years the diocese saw an exodus of some 200,000 residents, about half of them Catholic. The church had to radically restructure, and Wuerl launched a three-year process of assessment and dialogue; at one point, he says, there were 10,000 Catholics on committees at churches around the diocese.

In the end, Wuerl had to shrink the diocese by a third, from 333 parishes to 219. It was a dramatic reduction, but one that is still studied as a model by many other dioceses that have had to follow a similar course.

What was not followed as closely or quickly was Wuerl’s aggressive policies against priests who molested children. The issue had begun to percolate into the public square in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Wuerl started in Pittsburgh, but it would be more than a decade before the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, stunned by The Boston Globe’s revelations in Boston in 2002, would take concerted, collective action.

Wuerl was well ahead of that curve, in dealing both with victims and accused priests. In one case, when the Vatican in 1993 ordered him to return to ministry a priest Wuerl insisted was credibly accused of abuse, he traveled to Rome six times over several years in a dogged effort to overturn that ruling.

Remarkably, Wuerl eventually won that battle, and in 2002 he successfully petitioned John Paul to involuntarily laicize the priest. It was a surprising victory in the face of Vatican resistance -- and an episode that goes against the idea that Wuerl was only interested in keeping his superiors happy.

“You have to be able to express your convictions,” Wuerl says today of that episode. “What I hope I’ve learned over the years is that you have to be able to do it in a respectful, loving way. But you have to speak the truth in love.”

Many believe that Wuerl’s approach to the clergy abuse scandal hurt any chances he had for further advancement. But the years passed, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI and having a strong record on the abuse issue was considered a plus.

When the prestigious Washington archdiocese came open in 2006, Wuerl was a natural fit. He was known as a moderate who wouldn’t make the altar rail a battle line over a Catholic politician’s support for abortion rights, and he knew how to lobby hard in private while maintaining good relations in public -- vital traits for a relatively small archdiocese like Washington but one that has an extraordinarily high percentage of high-profile Catholics.

With the job came the prestige and influence of a cardinal's red hat but also intense opposition from the Catholic right -- an unusual position for Wuerl, so often seen as the quintessential insider. But the conservatives' criticism then was only a prelude to the anger that would burst forth after the election of Francis in March 2013.

Pope Francis 'is picking up where Vatican II left off'

How Wuerl voted in that conclave he will never reveal. But from the moment that Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires emerged on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica as Pope Francis, Wuerl has seemed transformed. Friends and colleagues say that if Wuerl remains as precise and focused as ever, he's also so enthusiastic and almost voluble that they joke they barely recognize him.

What is it about the revolutionary Francis papacy that has the cautious Wuerl so animated?

Part of it could be chalked up to frustration at the backlash that the pope's new approach has prompted, especially in the deeply polarized American church.

The criticism from Catholic conservatives is something that Wuerl has experienced himself, and something he reportedly finds confounding, to say the least. That's not only because Wuerl considers himself thoroughly orthodox, but because such public haranguing offends his sense of loyalty and his idea of what a good bishop should be, especially vis-à-vis the bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter.

"The bishops of the United States have always stood with the pope, always stood with the pope," he says firmly, "because that's our way of being bishops. And we should always be with, and never without, Peter."

That so many bishops are criticizing Francis and trying to undermine his agenda, often in backhanded ways, has at times elicited unusually pointed rejoinders from Wuerl. At the most recent Vatican synod last October, Wuerl grew so vexed by the critiques of the pope by many of his colleagues -- some of them fellow Americans -- that he called reporters to defend the pope and deliver his own message:

"I wonder if some of these people who are speaking, sometimes surreptitiously, sometimes half-way implying, then backing off and then twisting around, I wonder if it is really that they find they just don't like this pope," Wuerl told America magazine, a Jesuit-run weekly. "I wonder if that isn't part of it."

Asked what he would say to those bishops who said and did such things, Wuerl told America: "There's not much you can say because if someone isn't willing to hear you ... "

Wuerl is also personally loyal to Francis, whom he has known for years, even if they're not exactly bosom buddies.

“I feel extremely comfortable and in tune with this pope,” Wuerl says. But, he adds -- no surprise -- that he felt that way with every pope he has served under. He was “very comfortable with the theology of Benedict XVI,” he says, and he was closest to John Paul II: “I had a wonderful relationship with him, probably far more personal than any other pope.

“But now comes Pope Francis, and I have to say I feel very comfortable, very much in tune with what he’s saying, because it’s what a pastor’s heart says.”

That rings true to those who know Wuerl well, like Ann Rodgers, who covered Wuerl for years as a reporter at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette before joining the Pittsburgh diocese as communications director two years ago.

“His heart has always been with the people on the margins,” she says. “Pope Francis has freed him to be the bishop he has always wanted to be.”

But above all, Wuerl’s enthusiasm for the Francis papacy might be read as a vindication of sorts -- not only a demonstration of his cardinal virtues of perseverance and moderation, and working behind the scenes more than through the media -- but also the triumph of the vision of Vatican II that inspired Donald Wuerl from his days as a seminarian.

“I think what we are seeing [with Francis] is picking up where Vatican II left off,” Wuerl says. The turbulence of recent decades has stabilized, and the Second Vatican Council is now the tradition, yet one that allows for reform, even demands it. In that view, Francis is not so much a novelty but part of the continuity.

“So my excitement about Pope Francis is that he sees all this work that went before, and he embraces that and says, ‘Now we have to do it. ‘“

<https://www.americamagazine.org/content/all-things/cardinal-donald-wuerl-popes-man-washington>

Repentance of the Church

By Cardinal Donald Wuerl

The Cardinal's Blog – Seek First the Kingdom

February 25, 2016

Back when I young priest, I was approached by a man who told me he had left the Catholic faith twenty-five years earlier. “What kept you away?” I asked. “You,” he replied. Then he explained, “I don’t mean you personally, Father. I mean the Church.”

Somewhere along the line, he and many others like him became disaffected or disillusioned because of a bad experience or because of a belief that the Church had nothing to offer. At the same time, some who oppose the Church’s teachings have used the scandalous behavior of certain Catholics to say that those teachings and the Church herself should be rejected.

The gentleman who approached me came home, but many of our sisters and brothers still have not and our task now is to invite them back. As part of this effort, it is critical that we individually and as a Church repent of those things that might have led them to leave.

In the Creed, we profess that the Church is holy – and she is. The mystical body of Christ – which includes the saints in heaven, the faithful in purgatory and those of us living on earth – is pure and holy. The Church is sanctified by her nuptial union with Jesus Christ and by being filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet, we know that this transcendent reality of holiness has a human dimension with human imperfections. The Church is a holy nation, but her members on earth are sinners.

Jesus has established his kingdom on earth, though not in the fullness of its glory. It is truly here and will be fulfilled at the end of time, but in the meantime it is still growing and that growth is sometimes compromised by the scandals that arise from the sinfulness of the members of the Church. Our realization of this paradox is an occasion for working to remedy the evil, for purification and renewal.

At the last Jubilee in the Church, on the eve of the new millennium, Saint John Paul II recognized the need to acknowledge in an explicit way the wrongs done by those in human history who have called themselves Christian, many of which are listed here. This is necessary not only so that we might receive the Lord’s pardon, but so that those who have been offended by these failures might be healed and the way is opened to conversion (*Incarnationis Mysterium*, 11; *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, 33-36).

During this current Jubilee of God’s mercy, it is incumbent that we likewise examine our collective conscience and take responsibly for the things we have done, or failed to do, that might have presented a counter-witness or otherwise had a scandalous effect. Following the lead of Saint John Paul, let us confess again “our responsibilities as Christians for the evils of today. We must ask ourselves what our responsibilities are regarding atheism, religious indifference, secularism, ethical relativism, the violations of the right to life, disregard for the poor in many countries. We humbly ask forgiveness for the part which each of us has had in these evils by our

own actions, thus helping to disfigure the face of the Church” (Homily for the Day of Pardon, March 12, 2000).

The gravest of these wrongs in our time is the scandal of betraying the trust of children by violations of their innocence or otherwise by failing to care for them. The unspeakable crime of sexual abuse can leave behind substantial emotional and spiritual scars, and the Church can never express deeply enough our sorrow and contrition for the abuse itself occurring and also for the failure in various quarters to respond as they should have when it came to light. Even though we personally might not have been involved and while it is true that child sex abuse is a crisis throughout the secular society, we all have a responsibility to see that this evil is exposed and steps are taken to help survivors to heal and to protect children now and in the future.

We need also to acknowledge that in recent decades in our Catholic institutions there has been “explicit dissent, miscatechesis or personal conduct that tends to draw people away from the communion of the Church,” as I discussed in my pastoral letter, *Being Catholic Today: Catholic Identity in an Age of Challenge* (22). In addition are instances of a harsh word, indifference to someone’s needs, and disunity, including various factions within the one body of Christ. All these things, which both clergy and laity might engage in, could lead someone to think that the Church is not for them. For this, we must implore God’s mercy and his grace to do better.

In repenting, we must also remember that the scandalous behavior of a few Christians will not invalidate the Church. Much less will it void the kingdom of God. Our moral failings must not cloud our belief in the truth of Christ’s teachings. And believing in that truth, we must not fail to proclaim it.

The greatest of these teachings is that the Lord loves us, and “when faced with gravity of sin, God responds with the fullness of mercy” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 3). So, in this Lenten season, let us acknowledge our sins so as to prepare ourselves to receive that mercy in the Paschal Mystery and the grace of new life.

<http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2016/02/repentance-of-the-church/>

Get to know leading U.S. cardinal in new biography

By Joyce Duriga

Chicago Catholic

March 21, 2016

Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington, D.C., is one of the leading cardinals in the U.S. and in the universal Catholic Church today. During his time as archbishop of Washington, D.C., he has hosted two popes — Benedict XVI in 2008 and Francis in 2015 — and he participated in the conclave that elected Pope Francis three years ago.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed Cardinal Wuerl to help direct the October 2012 Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization and Pope Francis appointed him as a member of both the 2014 and the 2015 Synods on the Family.

It's worth it for Catholics in the United States to know Cardinal Wuerl. One way to do that is by reading "Something More Pastoral: The Mission of Bishop, Archbishop and Cardinal Donald Wuerl" (Lambing Press, \$13.95).

The authors, Ann Rodgers and Mike Aquilina, know Cardinal Wuerl well.

Rodgers covered him in Pittsburgh for years as the religion writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. For many years, Aquilina has worked with Cardinal Wuerl on various book projects and other efforts. What Aquilina and Rodgers have put together isn't a definitive academic biography of Wuerl but it's a good account of much of the cardinal's history.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, he received graduate degrees from The Catholic University of America and the Gregorian University in Rome and a doctorate in theology from the University of St. Thomas in Rome.

Pope John Paul II ordained him a bishop in January 1986, in St. Peter's Basilica, Rome.

The pope then sent him to Seattle, Washington, as an auxiliary bishop to mediate a tense situation with the archbishop there. All of those details come out early in the book and show how in his one year there, Bishop Wuerl learned to practice the pontiff's advice of creating unity and found that not everything is black and white.

Then, for 18 years until his appointment to Washington, he served as bishop of Pittsburgh.

Cardinal Wuerl, who is now 75 — the age when bishops are required to submit their resignation to the pope — has quietly had a hand in many of the big things going on in the Catholic Church in the United States.

Rodgers and Aquilina detail how Cardinal John Wright, under whom Wuerl served as secretary for many years, taught then-Father Donald the importance of interacting with the media. Prior to entering seminary, Wright earned a master's degree in journalism and paid his way working for a local newspaper. Throughout his ministry, Cardinal Wuerl has always valued the power of media

to reach people — whether it is secular or church media. One of the maxims he recites often is, “You can never communicate too much.”

Education is also important to the cardinal and he has done much to fortify Catholic schools in both Pittsburgh and Washington.

With his friend and spiritual advisor Capuchin Father Ronald Lawler (and Lawler’s brother Thomas), he wrote the best-selling “The Teaching of Christ: A Catholic Catechism for Adults.” This book — written while he was bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh — predated St. John Paul II’s promulgation of the “Catechism of the Catholic Church.”

The cardinal has since authored six other books, most recently “Ways to Pray,” which was reviewed in these pages in December 2015, and more are on the way.

Cardinal Wuerl was one of the first bishops to take a hard stance on clergy sexual abuse in the United States. The book details how in 1998, just months after becoming bishop of Pittsburgh, Wuerl met with victims of clergy sexual abuse — against the advice of lawyers. “Seeing the damage to their lives and their faith, he made zero tolerance the policy of the diocese.

He stood that ground even when the Vatican’s highest court ordered him to reinstate a priest who he believed to be guilty,” the authors write. He was the only bishop to take on a Vatican court in recent memory.

When Cardinal Wuerl decided to eradicate clergy sexual abuse, he didn’t back down. Many of the norms eventually adopted countrywide by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops are based on policies he implemented in Pittsburgh years before.

This is just a little taste of the fast-moving and compelling life of Cardinal Donald Wuerl documented in “Something More Pastoral.”

“Our book will hardly be the last work about Cardinal Donald Wuerl. We believe he will continue to make history, and history will continue to reflect on the contributions he has already made,” the authors write. “This is a beginning, not to be abandoned to the reading public, but soon, no doubt, to be superseded.”

<https://www.chicagocatholic.com/u.s./-/-/article/2016/03/21/get-to-know-leading-u-s-cardinal-in-new-biograph-1>

Pittsburgh diocese settles sex abuse claim

By Peter Smith

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

March 29, 2016

The Diocese of Pittsburgh last year reached a “five-figure” settlement with a man who claimed he was sexually abused as a youth by a priest whom then-Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua brought into the diocese despite knowing of his history and risk of sexual predatory behavior.

The out-of-court settlement, reached in October, was announced this week by Boston lawyer Mitchell Garabedian, who said his client was repeatedly molested by the Rev. John P. Connor, a New Jersey priest who worked in the North Hills in the 1980s.

Allegations of Father Connor’s serial attacks on youths before and after his Pittsburgh tenure were documented in a 2005 grand jury report on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, where the late Cardinal Bevilacqua later brought Father Connor.

But this settlement provides the first allegation that Father Connor also used his time in the Diocese of Pittsburgh to groom and sexually assault at least one youth.

Mr. Garabedian said he was releasing news of the settlement, alongside several others recently reached with the Archdiocese of Boston, to prod Catholic officials into becoming more transparent about priests and others who used their authority in the church to sexually abuse children.

“In so listing the perpetrators, transparency exists, which helps victims/survivors heal and gain a degree of closure,” said Mr. Garabedian, whose long role of representing clergy-abuse survivors was prominently featured in the recent movie “Spotlight,” about the scandal in Boston. “Once again the question remains: Where were the supervisors, and why weren’t they protecting children?”

The abuse occurred while Father Connor worked at St. Alphonsus Church in suburban Pine, he said.

The abuse occurred over two years when his client was between 12 and 14, according to Mr. Garabedian. It occurred in Father Connor’s car, in a Pittsburgh movie theater and on a basketball court in Bradford Woods, he said.

The Rev. Ronald Lengwin, a spokesman for the diocese, confirmed the settlement. He said Mr. Garabedian’s client originally contacted the diocese anonymously in 2008 before the attorney contacted the diocese on his behalf in December 2014.

Mike Manko, spokesman for Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen A. Zappala Jr., confirmed that the diocese turned over the information about Father Connor in January 2015 but that the case could not be prosecuted under the statute of limitations.

As the Post-Gazette reported in 2005 after the release of the Philadelphia grand jury report, Father Connor was a priest of the Diocese of Camden, N.J., whom then-Bishop Bevilacqua agreed to bring here in 1985. Father Connor had been arrested in New Jersey in 1984 on a charge of molesting a 14-year-old boy during a beach trip.

A pretrial agreement with New Jersey prosecutors enabled Father Connor to avoid a conviction if he stayed out of trouble for a year, according to the grand jury report.

After time at a church-affiliated treatment facility in Canada where sexually abusive priests were often sent, Camden's then-Bishop George Guilfoyle asked Bishop Bevilacqua to accept him because Father Connor's return to Camden would create scandal, the report said.

The Canada center, Southdown Institute in Ontario, had warned that Father Connor not work with adolescents, it said.

The Rev. Nicholas Dattilo, then a clergy personnel aide in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, wrote in a 1985 memo he was aware of the history of "bishops helping bishops" with sexually abusive priests and warned that "we could be accepting a difficulty with which we have no post-therapeutic experience" if Father Connor posed a "serious risk."

Bishop Bevilacqua handwrote on the memo, "I cannot guarantee that there is no serious risk," yet assigned him anyway, with Father Dattilo's reluctant acquiescence, according to the grand jury report.

First, Bishop Bevilacqua assigned Father Connor as chaplain at Sewickley Valley Hospital in October 1985. The priest lived at St. James Church in Sewickley during that time, according to the Pittsburgh diocese.

From October 1986 to July 1988, Bishop Bevilacqua assigned Father Connor to work as parochial vicar at St. Alphonsus.

Bishop Bevilacqua left to take over the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 1988.

Later that year, new Bishop Donald Wuerl arrived and began taking a harder line against sexually abusive priests. Father Dattilo revoked Father Connor's St. Alphonsus assignment and returned him to Camden's jurisdiction. Then-Archbishop Bevilacqua brought Father Connor to work in the Philadelphia archdiocese, where the grand jury report said he maintained a questionable relationship with an adolescent male.

Father Connor was removed from ministry in 2002 and has been assigned "to a life of prayer and penance in a diocesan retirement facility," according to spokesman Michael Walsh of the Diocese of Camden.

Father Dattilo went on to become bishop of Harrisburg and died in 2004.

Asked why the Diocese of Pittsburgh did not announce the settlement itself, Father Lengwin noted that Father Connor's case had been reported as early as 2005 and the diocese provided its personnel documents to the Philadelphia grand jury.

"It had been out there so much to the public, we felt there wasn't a need to do that," he said, adding that there are posters and bulletin notices in every parish, plus other public notices in church settings, urging anyone who has been abused to come forward.

News of the settlement caps a month that began with a Pennsylvania grand jury report outlining decades of abuse in the nearby Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, then the arrests of three priests in a Hollidaysburg-based Franciscan province for allegedly covering up abuse by a late friar.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/local/region/2016/03/29/Pittsburgh-diocese-settles-with-man-over-abuse-claim/stories/201603300025>

Should grand juries probe other dioceses for handling of sexual abuse?

By Peter Smith

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

April 3, 2016

In the past 11 years, grand juries in Pennsylvania have investigated two Roman Catholic dioceses and issued reports with the same narrative line:

Dozens of priests molested hundreds of children across the latter decades of the 20th century as their bishops and other higher-ups ignored or downplayed credible evidence of their offenses and even kept predators in ministry assignments with access to children.

That's what grand juries reported about the Archdiocese of Philadelphia in 2005 and 2011 and the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown last month.

Because those investigations largely delved far into the past, they yielded thick reports but few prosecutions due to the statute of limitations.

They did, however, yield a rarity: Four of the five Roman Catholic officials ever charged in the United States for covering up the sexual abuse of a subordinate, as opposed to committing the abuse themselves, have been accused as a result of these grand jury probes.

To be sure, the conviction of Philadelphia's former clergy-director has been overturned in a case that prosecutors are appealing. And three Franciscans charged last month following the Altoona-Johnstown probe for allegedly putting youths at risk of an abusive friar have only begun to have their day in court.

Some activists say investigators would find similarly shocking cases in the other six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania if they only took a look.

"Just about every diocese in that state should be subject to a grand-jury investigation, every one in the United States," said the Rev. Thomas Doyle, a Catholic priest from Virginia with a doctorate in canon law who serves as an expert witness and consultant for victims' attorneys filing claims against the church. "That's the only way you find out the absolute truth of what's going on."

Added former priest Robert Hoatson of New Jersey, founder of the Road to Recovery advocacy group for clergy abuse victims: "If they raided every diocese they'd find the same thing."

But prosecutors reached for comment say they don't plan on referring such cases to grand juries. They say local dioceses have cooperated over the years, and that they can't put limited law-enforcement time and money into a research project unless they believe there's a specific crime they can prosecute. Most known abuse by Catholic clergy occurred decades ago, past the statute of limitations.

“I don’t believe in using the resources of the grand jury to go on a fishing expedition in the absence of any complaint,” said Lehigh County District Attorney Jim Martin.

In 2002, when revelations of sexual abuse and coverup in the Archdiocese of Boston exploded into a global scandal, Mr. Martin said he and district attorneys in other counties in the Diocese of Allentown met with its bishop and other representatives.

Church officials, he said, voluntarily turned over files of priests accused of sexual abuse since the Allentown diocese’s founding in 1961. None of them could be prosecuted due to the statute of limitations or the death of the accused, Mr. Martin said.

“Since that time, counsel to the diocese has religiously sent me reports of anything that smacks of any kind of complaint,” he said, but often with the same result. “I would say they operate in the context of extreme caution, which is good.”

Allegheny County District Attorney Stephen Zappala’s office issued a statement saying it has long had a similarly cooperative relationship with the Diocese of Pittsburgh under Bishop (now Cardinal) Donald Wuerl, who governed the diocese from 1988 to 2006, and his successor, current Bishop David Zubik.

Bishop Wuerl “communicated to District Attorney Zappala that he operated under a policy of zero tolerance with respect to abusive and/or criminal behavior by the clergy and it’s a policy that has been carried through by Bishop Zubik as well,” Zappala’s office said.

The diocese “has never failed to expeditiously and fully provide information to this office that they believe represented a credible claim concerning possible abusive behavior by members of the clergy,” the statement said. “Additionally, we are not aware that this policy has ever been contradicted by any member of the community presenting themselves as a victim of abusive behavior.”

Dauphin County District Attorney Ed Marsico said he has a similar understanding with the Diocese of Harrisburg. “From what I’ve read about other areas, our diocese has been a leader in dealing with the priest abuse issues and being forthcoming with law enforcement,” he said.

Bishop Zubik said while he wouldn’t expect a grand jury investigation, “We don’t have anything to hide. We’ve continued to work hard” and cooperate with law enforcement.

Bishop Edward Malesic of the Diocese of Greensburg said he reviewed all of the diocese’s files on accused priests upon his arrival there last year. He said he’s satisfied that if a grand jury investigates, “they would find what I have found, that there is no one here serving in active ministry that has a credible accusation against them.”

He added: “I know that sometimes the Catholic Church looks like one big monolithic organization, but we do see ourselves as a communion of churches. While what I think happened in Altoona-Johnstown is certainly tragic and the same way in Philadelphia, I don’t know that we can paint all the churches and all the dioceses with that same brush.”

Under Pennsylvania law, a grand jury composed of citizens is an investigative tool available to district attorneys — or the state attorney general’s office if a case is referred to it, as happened when the Cambria County district attorney sent it the Altoona-Johnstown case. Grand juries hear testimony, review evidence and decide whether to recommend charges.

It can, quite legally, be a fishing expedition.

“A grand jury doesn’t have to have any basis of suspicion whatsoever to subpoena documents,” said Wesley Oliver, a professor of law at Duquesne University and director of its criminal justice program. “A grand jury can investigate a company just to make sure it is complying with the law.”

But “with known cases of murderers and rapists and terrorists, unless you’ve got a reason to think this is going to yield something, it seems like it’s a bad use of resources,” he said. And there’s no way of knowing what “other dioceses are looked into and found to be perfectly fine.”

Grand juries are not the only way to get a diocese to cough up the thousands of internal documents that provided the basis for the reports in Philadelphia and Altoona-Johnstown.

The damning internal files in the Archdiocese of Boston, which enabled the Boston Globe to conduct the 2001-2002 blockbuster investigation dramatized in the Oscar-winning movie “Spotlight,” came largely through discovery via victim lawsuits against the church.

A diocese like Pittsburgh’s, however, has never had a wholesale airing of internal documents. A decade ago, a lawsuit alleging coverup in the diocese stalled before the discovery phase because of a state court ruling that the statute of limitations had long passed.

“Fortunately I was able to deal with the diocese here on moral issues,” said attorney Alan Perer, one of the lawyers whose 32 clients alleged abuse by 17 priests and settled for \$1.25 million in 2007. “Even though nobody got a tremendous payment, they got some payments and in some cases it was very helpful.”

Most of the Pittsburgh priests named in that suit had been removed from ministry or died years before bishops had made a national zero-tolerance policy in 2002.

Last week brought a reminder of what a grand jury might find if it looked into the deeper past of the local church. The diocese reached a financial settlement with a man who said he had been sexually abused by a Camden, N.J., priest, John Connor, who worked North Hills assignments in the mid-1980s.

The 2005 Philadelphia grand jury report found internal Pittsburgh documents showing that Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, when he was bishop here before going to Philadelphia, brought Connor here and then to Philadelphia as a favor to the Camden bishop after Connor admitted in a New Jersey court to abusing a boy.

The 2011 Philadelphia grand jury also could serve as a cautionary tale.

It led to abuse charges against two priests and a schoolteacher in a case — based on a controversial star witness whose credibility has been challenged in recent Newsweek articles.

It also led to the conviction of former clergy-office director, Monsignor William Lynn on evidence he knowingly kept priests in ministry despite a history of abuse. But at Monsignor Lynn's trial, prosecutors also piled on evidence of coverup he had nothing to do with, and a Superior Court overturned Lynn's conviction in December. He remains behind bars while prosecutors appeal.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/state/2016/04/03/Should-dioceses-use-grand-jury-probes-like-in-the-case-of-the-Diocese-of-Altoona-Johnstown/stories/201604030154>

The Wuerl Effect

Washington's Archbishop On Being a Witness to History

By Ryan Hamill

Sojourners

April 7, 2016

In papal conclaves, the secret meetings in the Sistine Chapel during which new popes are elected, the cardinals swear themselves to secrecy and bar the doors. No one is allowed in. But in 1978, when the cardinals convened for the second time in a year after the 33-day papacy of Pope John Paul I, there was one exception.

The priest Donald Wuerl, secretary to Cardinal John Wright, escorted the cardinal into the chapel in his wheelchair. Sworn to secrecy like the cardinals, but without a vote, Wuerl stayed with the ailing Wright throughout the conclave. The meeting concluded with the historic elevation of the Polish cardinal Karol Wojtyla, who honored his predecessor by taking the name Pope John Paul II.

In 2013, now a cardinal himself, Wuerl returned to the Sistine Chapel to participate in another historic election — that of Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the Argentinian Jesuit who took the name Pope Francis.

For one reason or another, Donald Wuerl has found himself present for many of the most important events in the Catholic Church in the past half-century: He was in Rome during Vatican II; he orchestrated a landmark diocesan reorganization in Pittsburgh; he anticipated — and battled — the Vatican over the clerical abuse crisis in the United States. With a career in which he has ended up in the right place at the right time over and over again, some might dismiss Wuerl as a climber. But his determination to follow his conscience on difficult issues — and empower others to do the same — shows that he has been searching for something deeper than prestige.

Wuerl has been trying to guide his flock toward the heart of the Gospel, and in doing so, his ministry has become glue holding together major personalities and events through some of the Catholic Church's most trying times in recent history. His public life says quite a lot about the man — and maybe even more about the Church to which he belongs.

Cardinal Wuerl submitted his letter of resignation in November, something required of all bishops when they turn 75 (a bishop who is named a “cardinal” is still a bishop; the cardinal title is an extra honor — with extra responsibilities). But he's not quite finished yet.

“The pope hasn't accepted the resignation yet, so I'm not actually being measured for my leisure suit,” he told me. “We still have some work to do.”

When Cardinal Wuerl says “work,” he means it. Tales abound citing the cardinal's inexhaustible energy, which may partially explain why he's been at the heart of Catholic history in the past 50 years.

Yet his manner betrays no sense of hurry or fluster, even on the day I met him at the archdiocesan offices in Maryland, where four different staff members shuttled him between multiple interviews, briefing him as they readied him for a camera appearance and handing him a glass of water as they walked.

Wuerl speaks slowly, deliberately, softly. In fact, his speech pattern reminds me of the brothers of the Taizé monastery, where I lived while in France. Sitting with him, I briefly wondered if all Catholic religious leaders secretly take classes together in order to speak in an archetypally sage and monkish way.

Some questions must remain unanswered.

Pittsburgh: Early Innovation

Wuerl, who is of Irish and German ancestry, grew up in blue-collar Pittsburgh. His father Francis worked for the Pennsylvania Railroad in the immediate post-World War II period, when Catholicism thrived in urban, immigrant-heavy industrial centers like Pittsburgh. In this way, Wuerl's childhood was representative of much of Catholic life in the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century.

Wuerl went from “playing Mass” with his siblings (he got to be the priest while his older brother “was always the one who was asked to be the server,” Wuerl told me) to eventually entering the priesthood. When Cardinal Wright was appointed to a post in Rome, Wuerl followed him as his secretary. Later, he was appointed auxiliary bishop in Seattle.

When he returned to his city as bishop in 1988 — the hometown boy who “made it” — Wuerl found a very different Pittsburgh and state of affairs in the Church. The collapse of the once-thriving steel industry, combined with migration to the suburbs, had left the diocese overextended. Beloved but nearly empty ethnic parishes stood just down the street from each other while the diocese was operating with a deficit over \$3 million.

Cardinal Wuerl On How He Continues On Through Difficulty

The new bishop promptly responded with an effort so successful that, as Vatican reporter David Gibson notes, it “is still studied as a model by many other dioceses that have had to follow a similar course.” He listened carefully to concerns, arriving at somewhat strange but ultimately successful solutions — like combining two parishes into one, but letting the newly formed parish keep both church buildings. This way, parishioners retained emotional attachment to their buildings and some autonomy over how to cut costs. In the end, parishes would often approach the diocese of their own accord and request to close one of the buildings.

It wasn't the only early challenge Wuerl would face. In *Something More Pastoral: The Mission of Bishop, Archbishop and Cardinal Donald Wuerl*, Ann Rodgers and Mike Aquilina write that Wuerl was faced with an accusation of child abuse by a priest in his own diocese within months

of becoming bishop of Pittsburgh in 1988. His attorneys advised him not to meet with the accusers.

“You know what?” Wuerl replied.

“I’m their bishop. I’m their bishop and I need to respond to their pain.”

Wuerl met with the family at their home. The meeting changed him, according to his biographers: “I left them convinced I would never reassign a priest who had abused someone. They should never have a chance to do that again.” But a challenge to his resolution was brewing.

When a 19-year-old seminarian brought an accusation against a priest in the diocese, Wuerl questioned the accuser’s story — something he later regretted. But despite Wuerl’s skepticism, the priest, Father Anthony Cipolla, was sent for evaluation. A report then surfaced of a previous accusation against him from the ‘70s that had been withdrawn. Wuerl had Cipolla removed from ministry, but Cipolla’s appeal to the Vatican ended in his acquittal. They ordered Wuerl to return Cipolla to ministry. Wuerl demanded the Vatican reconsider, which was then an unheard-of act. Two years later, after he made multiple trips to Rome, the Vatican finally sided with Wuerl.

Spotlight, this year’s best picture winner at the Oscars, portrays the revelation of the Catholic hierarchy’s failure to protect children from abusive priests and its complicity in protecting abuser priests. At a time when numerous bishops failed to say, “we’re here” for children, that’s exactly what Wuerl did in Pittsburgh.

After such a bruising battle with the Church hierarchy, it appeared that any hope for Wuerl’s advancement was over. But when *The Boston Globe*’s *Spotlight* team broke the abuse story in 2002, Wuerl’s hard line against child abusing priests came to be seen in a new light. Not only had he stood up to his superiors in order to protect children, he also led the fight in the bishops’ conference to adopt a zero-tolerance policy for child abuse.

Cardinal Wuerl On The Crisis in Syria & Genocide of Christians

Wuerl’s early leadership in Pittsburgh combined two things that most leaders struggle to put together: a vision for dramatic reform, and the humility to bring others into the process. But when it mattered most — when the safety of children was at stake — Wuerl had no time for compromises or gradual reform. He acted swiftly and unilaterally, even at great danger to his career prospects.

The balancing act Wuerl has pulled over the years is remarkable. While respected for his ability to bring everyone to the table and make sure that every voice is heard, he does not allow the search for consensus to dilute his own moral vision.

Archbishop: Between Francis and Benedict

Wuerl’s carefully measured tone seems to clash with Pope Francis’ propensity to make headlines by means of one-liners and zingers. Appearances aside, their approaches might in fact not so

much clash as complement — Wuerl’s steady bass line backing up the sometimes daring melody of Francis’ papacy. After all, both men are in pursuit of the same thing: “something more pastoral,” a phrase Wuerl used when asking Pope John Paul II to let him leave Rome to go back to the U.S. as a parish priest. Once, when talking to inmates at Allegheny County Jail, Wuerl told them that when looking at paintings of Jesus’ crucifixion, one never sees the prisoners he died with.

“I thought I would like to remedy that by spending time with you,” he said, according to Rodgers and Aquilina. Wuerl’s hope for “something more pastoral” finds its answer in Pope Francis’ style of embrace.

While Wuerl (who received the cardinal’s red hat from Pope Benedict in 2010) has been an outspoken defender of Pope Francis against conservative critics, in certain ways he looks more like Francis’ predecessor: circumspect, well dressed, speaking in measured tones, friendly but not effusive.

Washington: Religion and Politics

If Wuerl thought spearheading the reorganization of a diocese and confronting the Vatican over child-abusing priests would be the most politically sensitive job he’d have, that illusion was dispelled in 2006 when he was appointed archbishop of Washington, D.C.

“Here, everything is interpreted politically. So you have to be so alert,” he told me.

It’s the hardest part of being archbishop in the nation’s capital, he said.

“The archbishop always has to be seen as a pastor, not a partisan politician.”

Like Benedict, who famously decried the secular world’s intolerance for religion as “a dictatorship of relativism,” Wuerl is deeply concerned with the spread of secularism and the accompanying threat to religious freedom.

“The secular view — it has every right to express itself, but what it doesn’t have a right to do is claim it’s the only view,” Wuerl said. “And I think that’s the challenge we’re seeing today: the hegemony of the secular position and the relativism that’s at the root of it, saying, ‘Your position now is no longer acceptable.’”

In what was perhaps a reference to the contraception case, *Zubik v. Burwell*, argued before the Supreme Court in late March, Wuerl continued:

“The challenge to religious faith is becoming the challenge to be able to speak it. Because the politically correct current is saying, ‘That’s discriminating. If you say this or that or some other thing out of your faith conviction, it’s a form of discrimination, because we hold a different position.’ That’s going to be the challenge. That’s why there are so many institutions right now in court, fighting for what was always a part of our heritage: the first freedom, religious freedom.”

Calling religious freedom “the first freedom” is no mere rhetorical flourish. In *Zubik v. Burwell*, opposing freedoms are at stake. The plaintiffs, who include Wuerl’s Archdiocese of Washington, argue that the religious exemption in the Affordable Care Act — which requires them to sign a waiver so that they don’t have to subsidize contraception for their employees — still makes them complicit in providing birth control, since signing the waiver “triggers” employees’ access to it directly from the health insurance company.

Wuerl believes *Zubik v. Burwell* is not just an argument about contraception. It may very well help decide whether religious freedom really is the United States’ “first freedom,” a freedom that transcends all others.

Individual Conscience, Not Culture War

Wuerl is hardly a traditional culture warrior. In 2004, some Catholic bishops argued that because of his pro-choice views, then-presidential candidate John Kerry should be denied Communion. As Rodgers and Aquilina relate, Wuerl, who can be reluctant to publicly campaign on divisive issues, spoke out in opposition.

“All of a sudden we were faced with the fact that politicians were being refused Communion, and we were being told that it was something we should all be doing,” Wuerl said. “But that was never part of the American tradition ... It has never been the responsibility of the priest or the bishop distributing Communion to judge the conscience of the person coming up in line. I don’t know how you can do that.”

“Individual conscience” is something of a theme for Wuerl. The two-part Synod on the Family, a Vatican meeting of bishops in 2014 and in 2015 to discuss Catholic family life, featured an unresolved discussion of the state of divorced and remarried Catholics, who under current Church teaching are not permitted to receive Communion. Pope Francis is due to publish *The Joy of Love*, his summary of the Synod, on April 8, and many are wondering if the pope will settle the question in some way.

“I’m not sure that there’s something to be settled, as there is something to be lived pastorally,” Wuerl said, channeling all of the smiling ambiguity — delightful to some and infuriating to others — that Pope Francis, too, has become known for.

But he went on to clarify that reception of Communion is a separate issue from remarriage. In the end, “You make a judgment about the state of your soul; your conscience makes a judgment, in light of the teaching.”

He continued: “This document I don’t think is going to start with: This is the only way you can live as a part of the Christian community. I think it’s going to say: This is the beautiful vision and many people live it, but for those that are having trouble with it, you’re still part of the family, and we’re here.”

We're here. The phrase doesn't answer the question of what will happen — Wuerl himself doesn't really know at this point — but it underlines Wuerl's approach whenever the Church encounters difficulty.

Legacy

When Pope Benedict XVI unexpectedly resigned in 2013, Wuerl had been named a cardinal, this time giving him a vote at the papal conclave.

Before the meeting, Wuerl lobbied for extended coffee breaks during the conclave, according to *Something More Pastoral*. It seems like a strange request, especially for someone with as rigorous a work ethic as Wuerl. But he wanted it, he told Rogers and Aquilina, because coffee breaks are the time that you talk and find middle ground. For someone like Wuerl, who prefers private discussion over political grandstanding, those times are crucial. And for however much longer Wuerl has left until Pope Francis accepts his letter of resignation, this Cardinal of the Coffee Break will have to “hold the middle” as much as possible on divisive issues. It's a task that his emphasis on careful listening and consensus building is well suited for. But his impact on the Catholic Church is bound to endure beyond his tenure, especially because of his role on the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops, the body that selects priests to become bishops. By selecting Wuerl for the Congregation, Pope Francis empowered him to begin refashioning the Church into one concerned more with the pastoral concerns the two already share, something that, for example, the appointment of Blase Cupich as archbishop of Chicago confirms.

But ultimately, it's not Wuerl's church — and for that, he is thankful.

“They say that Pope John XXIII would say at the end of the day, ‘Well Lord, it's your church, and I'm going to bed.’ There's a certain sense in which you have to believe that,” Wuerl told me.

“That's also the reason why you work so hard. When you realize this is the body of Christ, the church is the body of Christ, the presence of Jesus Christ in the world — of course you're going to do your best, and of course you're going to work as long and as hard as you can, and when it's all done at the end of the day, you can say, ‘It's your church, I did my best.’”

Cardinal Wuerl On The Religious Basis of the United States

Pope John XXIII is now a saint — he was canonized at the same time as Pope John Paul II. I asked Wuerl if he ever dreamed of being canonized.

“No,” he said, saying that as a boy, the saints seemed too distant in time — they weren't an example he could ever emulate.

“And then, it came, the canonization of saints much closer to our time, and then you realized, you really are called to be the best disciple of Jesus you can be.”

Wuerl thinks back to his time in seminary. Much less a life of holiness, he couldn't even believe that he was worthy of ministry.

“I said to the spiritual director, ‘I’m really having some doubts about being here, because I just can’t imagine myself being worthy of being a priest,’ and [the spiritual director] said, ‘Nobody can. It’s not that you’re worthy of being a priest, it’s that God calls you, and Jesus asks you to do your best.’

“And that’s at the heart of holiness.”

If Cardinal Wuerl has found himself at the heart of contemporary Catholic history, it hasn’t been on purpose. He’s been searching, from Mass to committee meeting, from fundraising event to coffee break, to get to the heart of something else.

<https://sojo.net/articles/wuerl-effect>

Child Protection is Everyone's Responsibility

By Cardinal Donald Wuerl

The Cardinal's Blog – Seek First the Kingdom

April 14, 2016

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. During this month, government agencies, community groups, and churches are encouraged to work together to share child-abuse and neglect prevention strategies and promote the well-being of children and families.

The responsibility of caring for and protecting children to ensure that they are in safe environments at home, at school, in our neighborhoods, and at church, belongs to each of us as a matter of charity and justice. For its part the Archdiocese of Washington has long been strongly committed to child safety in the Church and throughout society.

Now as part of that effort, the archdiocese has produced a series of innovative online videos to raise awareness of the evil of abuse of children and what we can do about it. This series is intended for all members of the community. The videos also enhance other existing safe environment training programs that archdiocesan employees and volunteers who work with children are required to take.

The video above is my introduction to the series and I invite you to view it and share it with others. To easily view subsequent videos when they are released each month, you may also choose to subscribe to our YouTube channel, WashArchdiocese.

The archdiocese has also developed a series of safety resources for parents, including advice on Internet safety, healthy teen relationships, and bullying. To view these tips and strategies, and to share them with others, please visit the Office of Child and Youth Protection website [here](#).

Being most vulnerable, our young people need us to care for them and protect them from harm. Child Abuse Prevention Month calls all of us to be vigilant in helping to provide a safe environment for all children and to help those who are victims of abuse find healing.

<http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2016/04/child-protection-is-everyones-responsibility/>

Editorial: Protecting our Children

Catholic Standard

April 20, 2016

Earlier this week, the Washington Post criticized our Holy Father, Pope Francis – and by extension the Catholic Church – for having “fallen short of his own promise: to come fully to terms with decades of child sex abuse by clergymen and the institutional cover granted to them by bishops and cardinals.”

It is clear that the scourge of child sex abuse has touched every segment of society. It has occurred within the Church – for which we continually express our sorrow and contrition – it has also occurred in public schools, juvenile detention facilities and youth groups, and it affects people of all backgrounds, occupations, and faiths. In fact, the Post itself highlights the breadth of this society-wide problem in its own reporting on this issue, which you can read [here](#). Without minimizing or deflecting from the responsibility of Church authorities for what happened in the Church, it is likewise essential that we realize the full scope of this plague in our communities and of the failures in addressing this evil throughout society.

In the face of the destructive crime of sexual abuse, which robs children of their innocence and can leave behind substantial emotional and spiritual scars, the priority of us all must be to do everything we can to prevent it and help survivors to heal. The Church – and specifically the Archdiocese of Washington – has for many years been resolute and worked hard to institute safeguards, to deal openly and decisively in rooting out perpetrators, to help survivors to heal, and also to foster reassurance that our churches and schools offer a safe and secure environment. Just as important, the pro-active steps the archdiocese has taken can guide the rest of society as it considers how to address this darkness.

Since 1986, fifteen years before the extent of the child abuse scandal came to light, the archdiocese has had a comprehensive child protection policy. Under this policy overseen by the Office of Child and Youth Protection, seminarians, clergy, teachers, other employees and volunteers who work with children undergo comprehensive criminal background checks and are required to be trained in child protection. The children in our schools and programs receive safe-environment lessons to learn to recognize inappropriate behavior and teach them what to do if someone acts inappropriately toward them.

Assistance is always offered to any victim of sexual abuse. These victims are treated with respect and with compassion. The archdiocese pays for counseling or therapy of their choice, which is provided without regard to legal obligation and irrespective of whether the person has proved his or her allegation. The archdiocese has never denied assistance to a victim on the basis that the statute of limitations bars his or her claim, and we never will.

In the archdiocese, all suspected allegations of abuse must be reported immediately to civil authorities. By cooperating in criminal investigations, the archdiocese has facilitated the criminal prosecution of those who have abused children in the archdiocese’s care, and we will continue to do so.

A Child Protection Advisory Board of lay experts, including at least one victim-survivor, monitors the archdiocese's efforts and publishes reports of any allegations received. In addition to the Board's oversight, third-party auditors also review the archdiocese's implementation of its policy, and have found the archdiocese to be in full compliance every year with archdiocesan policies and the U.S. bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. You can read the charter [here](#).

Unfortunately, some do not seem interested in reporting on these extensive efforts that have produced real progress and safety for children in the Archdiocese of Washington. Instead, it seems that the Post is intent on singling out and demonizing again the Catholic Church in a way that only leaves the wrongs of others in the dark.

Proposals such as the bill in Maryland that the Post refers to seem well-intended at first, but a closer look reveals they aren't really about protecting children or addressing the broad societal issue of child abuse. Maryland's bill would have essentially applied only to claims against private institutions like the Catholic Church to allow for large monetary damages in civil cases involving decades-old allegations. Public schools, meanwhile, would be exempt from such financial risk since victims of alleged abuse at those institutions typically only have a window of only a few months to seek civil damages.

Furthermore, while many claims of child sex abuse are meritorious, some are not. A lengthy or non-existent statute of limitations opens the door to specious claims, harming the ability of an innocent person who is accused to defend him- or herself. As a result of unreasonable delay, witnesses and/or evidence may have been lost or no longer available. This does not serve either claimant or accused.

Our society as a whole should engage in an effort to protect children from this scourge of child abuse because it is a societal problem. The best way to do this is not by singling out the Catholic Church for scorn and potential monetary damages, turning a blind eye to abuse in public institutions by advocating legislative measures that shield local governments from that financial risk. Instead, the most effective and meaningful way to address child abuse would be by enacting comprehensive child protection programs as the Catholic Church has done, and by educating children and adults about the universal nature of this evil and how we can work together to prevent it from happening.

Such proactive steps would offer a true path to healing and justice for our society and our people who have been wounded by child abuse, rather than attempting to solve the problem through unfair legislative remedies.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/News/Article/Editorial-Protecting-our-Children/2/2/6995>

Washington Archbishop: 'We'd be a mess without religion'

By Harry Farley

Christian Today

June 23, 2016

The Catholic Archbishop of Washington DC has defended religion's role in public life as “essential” and insisted “we'd be a mess without it”.

In a column for the Washington Post, Cardinal Donald Wuerl said that despite challenges, “religious faith and its moral perspective are not only still valid but essential aspects of a truly good and just society”.

He argued that without religion's understanding of the value of human life, “all human life becomes vulnerable”. Religion, he said, insists there is an objective reality to judge decision against.

“To speak out against racial discrimination, social injustice or threats to the dignity of human life is not to force values upon our society but rather to call it to its own legacy of long accepted, moral principles and commitment to defend basic human rights,” he wrote.

“Religion and Gospel values are not optional extras in the effort to build the common good, but essential. Science and technology have brought mankind enormous progress, but science and technology by themselves will not save us.

“At the heart of the contribution of the Church to the public square and therefore public policy is the recognition that it is not by bread alone that we live.”

Wuerl's defence comes after the Catholic Church in the US has been at the mercy of a series of revelations surrounding child sex abuse by clergy that have damaged its public role.

Wuerl, who has been an archbishop since 2006, has a “national reputation for zero tolerance of priests who molest minors” according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. In 1988 as a priest in Pittsburgh he accepted a dinner invitation from a family who was suing the diocese for abuse by a priest. Although his lawyers advised against it, Wuerl's attendance led to the resolution of the case and the eventual imprisonment of the priest in question.

<https://www.christiantoday.com/article/washington-archbishop-wed-be-a-mess-without-religion/89095.htm>

Former youth minister at St. Elizabeth Parish arrested and charged with abuse

By Staff Report

Catholic Standard

September 16, 2016

Brian Patrick Werth, a former youth minister for St. Elizabeth Parish in Rockville, was arrested by Montgomery County Police on Sept. 7 and charged with one count of fourth-degree sexual offense, one count of sexual abuse of a minor, and second degree assault. The 32-year-old Montgomery Village resident was arrested after detectives had investigated allegations of sexual abuse of a teenage St. Elizabeth parishioner.

The county's Child Protective Services department notified detectives in late August of allegations that Werth had inappropriate sexual contact with a 16-year-old female parishioner during a youth event at the church in May. A police statement said that detectives learned that Werth had been texting the teenager for the past two years, "and that the texts Werth sent to the victim were graphic and sexual in nature."

On the day the suspect was arrested, the Archdiocese of Washington issued a statement noting that the pastor of St. Elizabeth Parish had received a complaint regarding a case of alleged child sex abuse by Werth. The statement noted that the pastor immediately contacted the archdiocese's Child and Youth Protection Office, which reported the case to Montgomery County law enforcement. In compliance with the archdiocese's Child Protection Policy, Werth was immediately suspended from his duties at the parish and school, and his employment has since been terminated.

Meetings have been scheduled with parish and school staff, and letters have been sent to parish and school families to brief them on this matter.

"The Archdiocese of Washington takes seriously its responsibility to the children entrusted to its care," the archdiocese's statement said, noting that its Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington mandates criminal background checks, applications and education for all employees and volunteers who work with young people. Werth had cleared the background check and accompanying requirements.

The archdiocese's Child Protection Policy requires immediate reporting of suspected abuse to the authorities and an employee's/volunteer's immediate removal from work or ministry following a credible allegation, which the archdiocese said was done in Werth's case.

The archdiocese's Child Protection Policy, which has been in place since 1986, is publicly available online at www.adw.org. If people become aware of improper conduct by a person involved in archdiocesan ministry, they are urged to contact the director of the archdiocese's Office of Child and Youth Protection, Courtney Chase, at 301-853-5302.

The Montgomery County Police news release said that investigators believe there may be additional victims who have not come forward. Anyone with information regarding inappropriate contact involving Werth is urged to contact the police department's Special Investigations Division at 240-773-5400.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Parish-News/Article/Former-youth-minister-at-St-Elizabeth-Parish-arrested-and-charged-with-abuse/2/20/7259>

Archdiocese's child protection director teams with retired detective to launch new effort on keeping kids safe

Catholic Standard

November 23, 2016

The Archdiocese of Washington has further strengthened its child protection efforts by creating a new outreach for teachers, educators and others on how to identify and promptly report suspected child abuse.

“With this (new program), we are getting the message out that everyone in the Archdiocese of Washington has the ability to be informed on how to protect your children and your community,” said Courtney Chase, the archdiocesan director of Child and Youth Protection.

The new initiative is a discussion and question and answer presentation developed with a law enforcement officer that outlines the archdiocesan Child Protection Policy, educates participants on how to recognize child abuse, and outlines the process for reporting suspected abuse to civil authorities.

“We were asked by the cardinal to put together educational training for new priests and seminarians, and to strengthen the importance of this initiative, we brought in a law enforcement expert,” Chase said. “And, now we offer it to everybody.”

Tony Giovacchini, a retired detective who investigated child abuse and sex crimes for the Montgomery County Police, has joined with Chase in presenting the program and is serving as a consultant to her office.

“We wanted to create a program that is not just reactive but also has a proactive approach,” he said. “Written policies are great – we are all for the safety of the kids – but policies can’t just sit on a bookshelf with people who are not trained or who do not know what they should do. This brings the policy to life.”

The policy referred to by Giovacchini is the Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection Policy that has been in effect in the archdiocese for 30 years. When the Archdiocese of Washington instituted that policy in 1986, it was one of the first dioceses in the United States to do so. The policy mandates the reporting of abuse allegations to civil authorities, assisting those who have been harmed, and extensive education and training on how to prevent and identify mistreatment of children and youth.

It also requires a thorough background check for all employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children. The policy requires two forms of background checks – electronic background checks and fingerprinting – on employees, clergy, volunteers and anyone else who works with young people.

Both Giovacchini and Chase noted that the archdiocesan child protection policy is one of the strongest in the nation. Giovacchini added that the policy “in many aspects is stronger than the state law.”

Speaking to the toughness of the child protection policy, Giovacchini said he believes, “the archdiocese is a step ahead of every other education system in our area.”

“The policy is very stringent with a strict set of rules of behavior and a child-first doctrine,” he said. “Because this policy is in place, you can do the best you can (in protecting children), otherwise you are flying blind.”

The Archdiocese of Washington also makes resources and information about protecting children available online at www.adw.org/childprotection. There, parents will find information on the archdiocese’s child protection efforts, safety tips, how to recognize Internet and cyber bullying and other information.

The newly developed presentation by Chase and Giovacchini lasts between one and two hours, and is offered in an age-appropriate manner so that it can be presented to students, teachers, parishes, Home and School associations and other groups.

Chase called the new program “a hands-on approach where we are rolling up our sleeves and going out into the community to better educate them.”

Giovacchini said that the presentations “are tailor made” to the groups to whom he and Chase speak. “There is no one cookie cutter approach to this, but it is important to address specifically what the policy, the law and the protocols are” in dealing with child abuse, he said.

The program also teaches what is considered inappropriate contact between adults and minors and what takes place after an initial allegation is made.

“This subject matter is a dark subject, and I know it is a hard thing to speak about,” the retired detective said, “but many people don’t know what to ask or how to ask questions that provide concise and cohesive answers.”

Giovacchini said he and Chase also teach participants about the “tell-tale signs” of child abuse.

“Unless you know what to look for, you won’t be able to see the forest for the trees. We use clearly defined simple terms so that there is no ambiguity,” he said. “When you know the signs to look for, you have a bigger opportunity to get in front of the problem and stop it.”

“They say that everybody knows a little bit about a lot of things,” he added. “But in this case, knowing a little bit is not enough.”

Chase, who has two master’s degrees – one in social work and one in business administration – formerly served as director of counseling at Connelly School of the Holy Child in Potomac and previously worked as an investigator for the Montgomery County Department of Health and

Human Services. While in that job, she frequently worked with Giovacchini on child abuse and sexual assault cases.

“Asking the wrong questions or conducting your own investigation is counterproductive,” Chase said. “Having Tony come in and be a part of this is critical because he will show how to conduct a clear investigation so that its integrity is intact.”

Giovacchini said that it is important to promptly report suspicions of child abuse so that the proper authorities get involved.

“They know how to conduct forensic interviewing and how to ask the appropriate questions in the right way. When you defer to the experts, you get a clean and concise and objective investigation,” he said. “In these investigations, you are not looking for guilt or innocence, you are looking for the truth, and the truth will always point you in the right direction.”

Once officials start investigating allegations of abuse, “it is done expeditiously because we have children’s welfare at heart,” he added.

With a law enforcement officer and a social worker joining together to teach about child protection, Chase said, “the two disciplines come together in a unique initiative to support children and families.”

Giovacchini said that in his years of police work dealing with child abuse and sexual assault cases he learned “this is the hardest job to do, but also the most satisfying because you are helping true victims.”

“I think something like this can make a difference,” Giovacchini said of the new program. “I believe strongly that this can be a game changer and will work for everybody. This is our opportunity to move forward and get it right.”

Both Chase and Giovacchini said it was their belief that no similar program exists in this country.

“I know of no other jurisdiction or diocese taking this approach,” Chase said. “And we could be a model here for other dioceses.”

Giovacchini called the effort “groundbreaking, and I hope it spreads.”

“Cardinal Wuerl and the Child Protection Advisory Board recognize the importance of this,” Chase said. “The cardinal has made it a priority to protect everybody in this archdiocese, and, as he continues to make it a priority, this can help support his efforts.”

Chase said that persons, parishes, schools and groups interesting in hosting the presentation by her and Giovacchini should call the Child and Youth Protection Office at 301-853-5328. “We will schedule during the day, on the evenings and on the weekends,” she added.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/News/Article/Archdiocese-s-child-protection-director-teams-with-retired-detective-to-launch-new-effort-on-keeping-kids-safe/2/2/7404>

Zero tolerance for abuse: Pittsburgh Bishop Donald Wuerl's approach to abuse survivors was, 'I'm their bishop, and I need to respond to their pain'

By Ann Rodgers

Catholic Standard

November 23, 2016

The grand jury investigating how allegations of child sexual abuse were handled by six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania will review the record of Cardinal Donald Wuerl during his 18 years as bishop of Pittsburgh. Those records will reveal that he was a champion of zero tolerance.

Shortly after becoming bishop of Pittsburgh in 1988, he rejected his attorneys' advice and met with victims. Seeing the damage to their lives and their faith, he made zero tolerance the policy of the diocese. He stood that ground even when the Vatican's highest court ordered him to reinstate a priest whom he believed to be guilty. At the meeting of the nation's Catholic bishops in 2002 in Dallas, he led the floor fight that established zero tolerance as a national policy of the Catholic Church in the United States.

Upon becoming bishop of Pittsburgh, he found three priests on administrative leave for sexually molesting two brothers. The parents, out of concern to protect others, pressed charges a few months later and filed suit.

Bishop Wuerl wanted to visit the family.

"The almost unanimous advice was to follow the legal advice, which was . . . that, if you had been sued, you shouldn't go," said Father Ronald Lengwin, his longtime spokesman in Pittsburgh. But Bishop Wuerl, he continued, "said, 'You know what? I'm their bishop. I'm their bishop and I need to respond to their pain.' And he decided he was going, and he went."

A bishop must respond as a pastor, Cardinal Wuerl explains. "The lawyers could talk to one another, but I wasn't ordained to oversee a legal structure. As their bishop I was responsible for the Church's care of that family, and the only way I could do that was to go see them."

The parents invited him to dinner at their home. Then-Father David Zubik went with him.

"You can't be part of a meeting like that without realizing the horrific pain and damage that abuse causes," recalled Bishop Zubik, who succeeded his mentor as shepherd of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. "That family was particularly close, not only to each other, but exceptionally close to the Church. To experience the betrayal that they felt from representatives of the Church, from individuals they had trusted their kids with – you can't describe it."

Cardinal Wuerl recalled that “the family could not have been more gracious, especially considering what they had experienced. They were such a good witness to the faith for me at that point. I left them convinced I would never reassign a priest who had abused someone. They should never have a chance to do that again.”

Stories of the next day in the office became legend in the Pittsburgh chancery.

“It changed him. It just changed him in many ways in terms of how his response was going to be,” Father Lengwin said. “We were going to be much more pastoral.”

Bishop Wuerl held a mandatory meeting to inform all priests that sexual contact with a minor was not simply a sin that could be forgiven, but a crime that would result in permanent removal from ministry and possibly prison.

The most vivid memory of Father Lawrence DiNardo, his chief canonical adviser who is now general secretary of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, was “that the silence of the priests cannot be tolerated,” he said. “Bishop Wuerl’s point of view was that you need to understand that it’s not in the interest of the Church or the interest of the priesthood to be silent. If you know something, you need to tell us.”

The diocese settled the lawsuit. None of the priests returned to ministry. Two went to prison. The third, against whom charges were dropped due to a technicality, was forced to retire and forbidden to say Mass for anyone other than nuns in the convent where he was assigned to live.

In 1989 Bishop Wuerl created the Diocesan Review Board, a panel of professional experts on child sexual abuse that eventually also included the parent of a victim. He made decisions in abuse cases only after hearing their evaluation and recommendation.

Fred Thieman, an Episcopalian and former U.S. attorney for Western Pennsylvania, chaired many review-board meetings. The board had “extreme independence,” he said. “We were given the freedom to reach whatever decisions we wanted to reach, based on the best evidence.”

Bishops had no guidelines in 1988. And there was little support from Rome for removing abusive priests, according to an analysis that Nicholas Cafardi, dean emeritus of the Duquesne University School of Law, presented in his book, *Before Dallas*. The 1983 Code of Canon Law had been drafted to give priests rights that would protect them from the arbitrary decisions of bishops. But little attention had been given to protecting the faithful from dangerous clergy. The Church’s statute of limitations was very short, and there was a “catch 22” involving mental illness. Bishops argued that perpetrators should be removed due to mental illness, but canon law forbade penalizing a priest for mental illness, and removal from ministry was a severe penalty.

Bishop Wuerl was aware that he faced resistance in Rome. His 1993 written policy on clergy sexual misconduct prescribed permanent removal from ministry for sexual abuse of a minor. But, knowing that Rome might overrule him, he created a possibility that a priest who had been treated and approved for ministry by psychiatrists, and who lived under close supervision, could

serve in a setting that involved no contact with children. It was used briefly in one case, but the priest was removed after more allegations came in.

Bishop Wuerl was simultaneously working through the national bishops' conference to urge Rome to change Church law so that abusive priests could be removed swiftly and permanently. Such changes would be a long time coming.

“When decisions had to be made, we were breaking new ground,” Father DiNardo said. “How do you restrict a person’s faculties when you don’t have the penalties canonically? Everything related to...the sexual abuse scandal has to be contextualized in the time and place they occurred. From hindsight, there are things we do that are easier now because of the changes in the rules. But at the time it happened it wasn’t so easy.”

One reason Bishop Wuerl worked so hard on the issue was the case of Father Anthony Cipolla, which defined his response to abuse and eventually began to change the way Rome responded.

In November 1988 Tim Bendig, a 19-year-old former seminarian, filed a suit saying that Father Cipolla had molested him from the age of 12. In remarks he would later repent of, Bishop Wuerl challenged Bendig’s version of events. It was the only time he publicly questioned an accuser’s story.

The bishop eventually deemed the case highly credible.

He learned through that experience “to be much more open to listening to a victim, even if all the circumstances don’t add up immediately,” he said. “We learned that, when an allegation comes in, you turn it over to the public authorities. Because they are the ones who can investigate whether a crime has taken place. We can’t.”

Cipolla, who died in September 2016, never was tried or convicted, and maintained his innocence.

Despite the bishop’s initial skepticism, he immediately sent Father Cipolla for evaluation. He was never returned to ministry.

Bendig’s attorney had unearthed a detailed detective’s report from 1978, when Father Cipolla was charged with molesting a 9-year-old boy. The priest had admitted having the naked child on the bed in his rectory, but claimed to have been giving him a medical exam. A decade later in his appeals to the Vatican, Cipolla would instead claim that the mother was confused, and that the “exam” was a catechism quiz.

The mother’s sworn deposition stated that she dropped the charges under pressure from her pastor, Bishop Vincent Leonard, and Cipolla’s attorney.

In March 1993, the Vatican’s highest court, the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, ordered Bishop Wuerl to return Father Cipolla to ministry. Instead, the bishop took the almost unheard-of step of petitioning the court to take the case back.

The verdict discounted Father Cipolla's 1978 arrest because the boy's mother withdrew the complaint. It said that Bishop Wuerl should not have used the canon on mental illness to remove Father Cipolla because it was only for severe psychosis.

Bishop Wuerl was ordered to accept Father Cipolla as a priest in good standing, give him an assignment, allow him to say Mass publicly and to wear clerical garb.

That order "scared and paralyzed the other bishops," said Nicholas Cafardi. Bishop Wuerl was "to the best of my knowledge, the only one who actually appealed a [Vatican] decision returning an allegedly abusive priest to ministry. He does stand out. He took on the Roman canonical system and said they had got it wrong. That took a lot of courage."

The conflict was between a pastoral approach and a purely canonical one, Cardinal Wuerl said. "When we realized how flawed the decree was, you have to respond. It wasn't as if we were all standing around and said, 'Let's take on the Holy See.' One thing led to another and then to another. As it turned out, we were right."

The Vatican court had lacked key facts – including the pending civil trial – because under Vatican rules at the time, the diocese wasn't represented at the hearing. Instead, the case against the priest was handled by the Vatican's Congregation for Clergy. That procedure changed as a result of Bishop Wuerl's efforts.

In October 1995, the Signatura reversed itself and ruled that Bishop Wuerl had been right to remove Cipolla from ministry. That would make it far easier for other bishops to do the same because it changed the standard for removing a priest due to mental illness.

The second ruling, given after the Signatura sought an authoritative definition of the canonical term "psychic defect" from the Vatican office that interprets the Code of Canon law, said it meant any mental condition that could harm the faithful.

Close observers believe that Bishop Wuerl stepped on powerful toes when he sent the case back to the Signatura, blocking his advancement for the remainder of that pontificate.

"I think he knew it was going to hurt him," said Sister Margaret Hannan, his longtime chancellor. "He was so politically astute that he knew sometimes that his decisions were political suicide, but he had such a vision and such a strong faith and such spiritual depth that he would go forward because of his love for the people and for the Church. He was willing to take personal hits."

Although other dioceses weren't fighting pitched battles with the Vatican over the right to remove child molesters, Bishop Wuerl believed the other bishops understood the problem and were trying to do the right thing. In early 2002 he was working on revisions to the diocesan policy that would end promises of confidentiality to victims and require all allegations be given to the civil authorities. That was when news broke about a sex-abuse case that had been covered up in the Archdiocese of Boston, followed by similar reports from many other dioceses.

“I just assumed that everybody was doing what we would do. When the Boston situation erupted, it was a shock,” he said.

Too many bishops, he said, had relied on psychiatrists and lawyers, rather than on their own pastoral judgment. “A scientist’s decision or a doctor’s decision or a technician’s decision is a very valuable piece of information. But that is only one piece of the puzzle. You wouldn’t be a bishop if all you needed was a treatment-center professional to tell you how to deal with clergy,” he said at the time.

Shortly before the summer meeting of the U.S. Conference of Catholic bishops, draft rules for responding to allegations were circulated to the bishops. The proposed norms included a set of conditions under which a priest with one past offense could return to ministry, including parish ministry.

Bishop Wuerl announced that he would oppose any policy that returned an offender to ministry, especially parish ministry. “If you are going to make a mistake, make it on the side of the young people. Err in defense of the flock, not the shepherd,” he said.

The exception for a single instance was unreasonable because no one knew if other victims had remained silent, he said. “Who is doing the counting?” he asked.

At the Dallas meeting, Bishop Wuerl broke with his usual practice of working behind the scenes. Instead he led a floor fight that resulted in a zero-tolerance policy. Against strong opposition he also won approval to define sexual abuse more broadly than did the civil law, so that priests could be removed for behavior with a minor that was immoral but not necessarily illegal.

He had a critical role in a floor fight over reporting, arguing that bishops must, at a minimum, immediately tell civil authorities about any allegation in which the alleged victim was still a minor. Some bishops only wanted to report allegations that they had first investigated and found credible. Bishop Wuerl convinced the majority that the bishops can judge only fitness for ministry, while civil authorities must determine whether a crime was committed. “I believe where we have erred in the past is appropriating to ourselves the decision of whether or not to report the allegation because we have decided it is not credible,” he said.

Within a year, the charter seemed to be influencing Rome more than Rome had influenced the charter. The Vatican issued new rules that allowed the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to laicize a priest against his will and without a Church trial if the evidence was clear and the wrongdoing was egregious. Furthermore, the judgment could not be appealed to the Vatican’s court system.

Pope Francis has taken steps to address child sexual abuse that Cardinal Wuerl has advocated since the Dallas Charter of 2002.

Cardinal Wuerl has led by example, said Msgr. Ronny Jenkins, who formerly served as the general secretary of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and previously was the canon

lawyer who advised them on implementation of the child-protection charter and norms. “He really understood, as a shepherd, what this meant for children, for the faithful, for the Church. In Pittsburgh he fought very strongly to institute strong measure of protection and to address the injustices and the priests who had offended. He didn’t just announce something, he did it.”

(This article is excerpted from a chapter in the book, “Something More Pastoral: The Mission of Bishop, Archbishop and Cardinal Donald Wuerl,” written by Ann Rodgers and Mike Aquilina. Rodgers, who wrote this article, serves as the communications director of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and previously covered religion for Pittsburgh newspapers for 20 years.)

Sidebar: Cardinal says witness of abuse survivors helped Church change its policies to better protect children

Victim-survivors who report childhood sexual abuse at the hand of clergy should not be criticized for pointing out times when Church leadership failed, according to Cardinal Donald Wuerl.

“They are the witnesses who call us to uphold our own moral teaching,” he said. “The survivors who came forward when sexual abuse was rarely spoken of in public triggered changes that protect children today.”

The cardinal also said, “Innocent people who gain public attention for coming forward should not be slandered because they did the right thing by seeking action against an abuser.”

He finds it troubling that a few online forums masquerading as victim-advocacy sites – with no apparent ties to any mainstream victim-advocacy organizations – attack some of the victim-survivors who had done the most to improve the Church’s response to allegations of child sexual abuse. In an effort to claim that then-Bishop Wuerl didn’t remove abusive priests, the sites try to discredit those who reported abuse in one of Pittsburgh’s best known cases: that of the late Anthony Cipolla.

Among those they malign is Tim Bendig, now 47, a former seminarian who sued the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 1988, reporting that then-Father Cipolla sexually abused him when he was 12 years old. Cipolla died earlier this year, maintaining his innocence.

Bishop Wuerl initially expressed skepticism about Bendig’s claims, but despite those reservations he sent Cipolla for an evaluation. Cipolla was never returned to ministry and appealed to the Vatican for reinstatement.

In 1992, when the Vatican’s highest court ordered Bishop Wuerl to return Cipolla to ministry, Bishop Wuerl won an almost unheard-of reversal that made it easier for bishops to remove predators from ministry.

“Without Tim Bendig’s courage and determination in bringing this case, it might have taken longer to begin to change a canonical system that made it difficult for bishops to remove priests who were a danger to the faithful,” Cardinal Wuerl said.

He apologized for his initial discounting of Bendig's allegation, saying that he learned to never dismiss another allegation out of hand.

"I was among those not immediately persuaded by some concerns he raised. I have since learned to be less hesitant in taking at face value such allegations," Cardinal Wuerl said. "Tim Bendig told the truth about a priest who was a terrible danger to children, and without his action that priest might have continued in ministry. Telling that truth helped all of us to become a better Church."

Bendig, who overcame abuse-related depression and now has a successful business, resolved 20 years ago not to let anger consume him. But the online attacks have triggered rage that he thought he had left behind.

"I'm thankful that Cardinal Wuerl has spoken out on my behalf. When you Google yourself and see all these posts calling you a liar, it feels like no one has ever believed you," Bendig said.

"For all these years I have loved the Catholic faith even though the flashbacks made it impossible for me to set foot in a church. Pope Francis has made me feel like I can return, and the cardinal's words have opened the door," Bendig said. "I have always admired the way that Cardinal Wuerl took a stand against abusers. My hope is that, in the future, I can work with the church to get the message out about child protection."

The grand jury investigating how allegations of child sexual abuse were handled by six Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania will review the record of Cardinal Donald Wuerl during his 18 years as bishop of Pittsburgh. Those records will reveal that he was a champion of zero tolerance.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/News/Article/Zero-tolerance-for-abuse-Pittsburgh-Bishop-Donald-Wuerl-s-approach-to-abuse-survivors-was-I-m-their-bishop-and-I-need-to-respond-to-their-pain-/2/2/7460>

Cardinal Wuerl apologizes to Pittsburgh victim of sex abuse

By Peter Smith

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

November 30, 2016

In his first year as the Roman Catholic bishop of Pittsburgh in 1988, Donald Wuerl publicly voiced doubts about a lawsuit filed by a former seminarian who claimed that when he was a boy, a priest had sexually abused him for years.

Despite the skepticism, now-Cardinal Wuerl did send the priest off for a psychiatric evaluation. The bishop became convinced soon enough that the allegations against the Rev. Anthony Cipolla were credible. He prevented the priest from returning to the ministry even through a high-stakes legal battle with the Vatican in the 1990s.

Now Cardinal Wuerl, the archbishop of Washington, is paying tribute to Tim Bendig, the abuse survivor who filed that initial lawsuit, apologizing for his initial doubts and saying he helped protect other children and reform the church.

Abuse survivors such as Mr. Bendig call on church leaders to “uphold our own moral teaching,” Cardinal Wuerl said.

“I was among those not immediately persuaded by some concerns he raised,” Cardinal Wuerl said in a Nov. 23 statement in the Archdiocese of Washington’s newspaper, the Catholic Standard. “I have since learned to be less hesitant in taking at face value such allegations. Tim Bendig told the truth about a priest who was a terrible danger to children, and without his action that priest might have continued in ministry. Telling that truth helped all of us to become a better Church.”

Mr. Bendig, now a small-business owner living in suburban Pittsburgh, said he was overwhelmed by Cardinal Wuerl’s affirmation.

“It’s amazing,” Mr. Bendig said. “I am humbled that Cardinal Wuerl went above and beyond not only to speak out for the many victims but specifically apologizing to me. I can’t ask for anything more than that.”

Two factors went into the timing of Cardinal Wuerl’s statements, decades after the case arose. Mr. Bendig said he had spoken with church officials, asking for them to affirm his account even as some internet pages persistently challenge his account and Cardinal Wuerl’s overall record here.

Also, the statement comes amid news that the Pennsylvania attorney general’s office has subpoenaed records from the Diocese of Pittsburgh and five other Catholic dioceses as it investigates the handling of sexually abusive priests going back decades. That includes then-Bishop Wuerl’s 1988-2006 tenure in Pittsburgh before he was reassigned to Washington.

The Catholic Standard article says investigators will find Cardinal Wuerl to have been a “champion of zero tolerance” since his time in Pittsburgh. It includes a lengthy excerpt from a 2015 biography of Cardinal Wuerl, “Something More Pastoral,” written by former Post-Gazette religion writer Ann Rodgers and Catholic author Mike Aquilina.

It says then-Bishop Wuerl was prompted to take a hard-line stance against abusive priests early in his tenure here after a dinner meeting with the parents of two victims of other priests, where he saw firsthand the impact on victims and their families.

The Rev. John T. Sweeney of Greensburg waits for his attorney on Monday following his arraignment, where he was charged with sexual abuse.

In Mr. Cipolla’s case, the 1988 lawsuit was not the only allegation against the former priest. Mr. Cipolla also was charged in 1978 for sexually abusing a boy. The mother of that boy soon agreed to drop those charges — because, she later testified in a deposition, she faced intense pressure to do so from then-Bishop Vincent Leonard and others.

Mr. Cipolla was never convicted criminally and always maintained his innocence. But church officials found the charges credible.

He appealed his removal from ministry to a Vatican court and won a 1993 ruling ordering his reinstatement.

Bishop Wuerl refused to reinstate him and mounted a rare appeal.

The Vatican reversed course in 1995, affirming Mr. Cipolla’s removal from ministry. It removed him completely from the status of priest in 2002.

That was the year that an explosion of revelations about sexually abusive priests, beginning in Boston, forced bishops to adopt a nationwide policy similar to what Bishop Wuerl had been using, requiring the ouster of any priest for one or more instances of sexually abusing minors.

Cardinal Wuerl said Mr. Bendig’s pursuit of this case helped pave the way for that policy change.

“Without Tim Bendig’s courage and determination in bringing this case, it might have taken longer to begin to change a canonical system that made it difficult for bishops to remove priests who were a danger to the faithful,” he said.

Mr. Bendig and the diocese eventually settled his lawsuit.

Mr. Cipolla died of cardiac arrest at age 73 in August while driving in Warren, Ohio.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2016/11/30/Cardinal-Wuerl-apologizes-to-Pittsburgh-victim-of-abuse-by-priest/stories/201611220160>

Former Carroll trainer arrested on misdemeanor sex abuse charge

By Staff Report
Catholic Standard
December 4, 2016

Jimmy Augustin, a former athletic trainer and teacher at Archbishop Carroll High School in Washington, was arrested by D.C. police on Dec. 1 and charged with misdemeanor sexual abuse of a minor. Augustin, a 33-year-old Fort Washington resident, had been put on leave and then fired by the school weeks before the arrest, after an allegation of inappropriate contact with a student was deemed to be credible.

Detectives from the Physical and Sexual Abuse Branch of the Metropolitan Police Department's Youth and Family Services Division announced that Augustin was arrested for a child sexual abuse offense that allegedly occurred at the school between September and October 2016.

A press release from the police department noted, "The investigation revealed that the adult male suspect engaged in sexual contact with the female juvenile. The suspect and the victim were known to each other at the time of the offenses."

Augustin, who also taught one class at the school, was put on leave several weeks earlier after a credible allegation came in that he was having inappropriate contact with a student, and he was fired shortly thereafter. NBC4 reported that according to court documents, Augustin has denied that anything inappropriate happened.

In a statement after the arrest, Archbishop Carroll High School noted that the school and the Archdiocese of Washington "take seriously the responsibility of protecting the children entrusted to their care." The statement from Archbishop Carroll said the school followed the archdiocese's Child Protection Policy, and that before his employment, Augustin had cleared a criminal background check and accompanying requirements. Then as the policy requires, Augustin was immediately removed from work following a credible allegation, and police were notified, and school and archdiocese officials fully cooperated with law enforcement throughout the investigation, the Carroll statement said.

The following is the text of Archbishop Carroll High School's statement:

Archbishop Carroll High School and the Archdiocese of Washington are aware of Mr. Augustin's arrest.

Archbishop Carroll High School and the Archdiocese of Washington take seriously the responsibility of protecting the children entrusted to their care. The Child Protection Policy of the Archdiocese of Washington mandates criminal background checks, applications and education for all employees and volunteers who work with young people. Mr. Augustin cleared the background check and accompanying requirements. The policy also mandates an employee's/volunteer's removal from work following a credible allegation. This requirement was also met in this case; Mr. Augustin was removed from work immediately following a

credible allegation. The school also immediately contacted the Child Protection Office of the Archdiocese of Washington and involved the police. Archbishop Carroll subsequently terminated his employment. Throughout this investigation, Archbishop Carroll High School and the Archdiocese fully cooperated with law enforcement.

Because the situation involves an ongoing legal matter, Carroll faculty, staff and administration, and the archdiocese cannot comment further on this case. If you believe you have information pertinent to this case, you are encouraged to contact the Metropolitan Police Department at 202-727-9099.

The archdiocese's Child Protection Policy, which has been in place since 1986, is publicly available online at www.adw.org. If at any time you become aware of improper conduct by a person involved in archdiocesan ministry, please contact the director of the archdiocese's Office of Child and Youth Protection, Courtney Chase, at 301-853-5302.

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/News/Article/Former-Carroll-trainer-arrested-on-misdemeanor-sex-abuse-charge/2/2/7485>

Cardinal Wuerl voices Catholic support for immigrants but urges caution about sanctuary churches

By Julie Zauzmer
The Washington Post
March 2, 2017

Cardinal Donald Wuerl, leader of the Washington Archdiocese's 620,000 Catholics, said Thursday that the church's values compel it to oppose the deportation of people already living in the United States.

But Wuerl expressed caution about the idea of churches acting as sanctuaries for those seeking to avoid deportation, as some congregations across the country have offered.

"When we use the word sanctuary, we have to be very careful that we're not holding out false hope. We wouldn't want to say, 'Stay here, we'll protect you,' " he said, explaining that he's not sure churches can legally guarantee protection to people who might move into a church building, or that federal agents would necessarily respect the boundaries of a church as a place that they cannot enter. "With separation of church and state, the church really does not have the right to say, 'You come in this building and the law doesn't apply to you.' But we do want to say we'll be a voice for you."

Wuerl made the comments in a meeting with editors at The Washington Post, where he discussed many issues of interest to the Archdiocese of Washington, which covers the District and much of Maryland and is one of the nation's most prominent Catholic dioceses.

Catholics have been torn politically since the election of President Trump. A majority of Catholics voted for Trump, but bishops and leaders of Catholic nonprofit organizations have fiercely opposed some of Trump's policies in the first weeks of his presidency, particularly Trump's attempt to suspend refugee admissions to the United States. Pope Francis has repeatedly spoken about the virtue of welcoming refugees and has made thinly veiled references to those who would build walls, as Trump has proposed doing along the country's southern border.

The Catholic Church has long advocated for religious liberty in the United States and around the world, but one of Trump's first proposals on the subject is an unexpected one that Wuerl indicated he would not necessarily approve of.

Trump has vowed to "totally destroy" the Johnson Amendment, the law banning tax-exempt houses of worship from supporting political candidates. Wuerl suggested that he doesn't see a need for Trump to do away with the 63-year-old law.

He said he was content with the restrictions currently placed on churches and other nonprofit groups. "I feel much more comfortable with what has been the traditional separation of church and state, so that you don't have the pulpit used then as a place where candidates are invited to speak to the congregation. ... I like to keep a distinction between the role of the pastor and the role of the politician."

Indeed, Wuerl said repeatedly during his discussion with Post editors that he did not feel it was his place to voice opinions on specific government policies. But he did name serving the needs

of immigrants — from providing food to offering legal representation — as one of the archdiocese’s highest priorities now.

“When we come to something like immigration, our voice is always going to be: Aren’t we supposed to be welcoming people, especially those who are fleeing persecution?” Wuerl said.

The cardinal took issue with Trump’s earlier statement that he would prioritize Christian refugees over Muslims and others. Catholics have long been concerned about the persecution of Christians by the Islamic State, he said, but the United States should be just as open to Muslims and anyone else suffering persecution.

He also expressed concern for undocumented immigrants living in the United States — many of whom are Hispanic Catholics — who are fearful that they may be deported, as ICE officials have been conducting raids in numerous states.

“It’s one thing to talk about securing sovereign borders,” Wuerl said. “The people that are here now, we have to treat them as brothers and sisters.”

Many of the Trump administration’s policies may have tremendous implications for the Catholic Church. Education Secretary Betsy DeVos envisions a major expansion of school voucher programs that could pay for more children to attend Catholic schools. A repeal of the Affordable Care Act would reverberate for Catholic hospitals, which account for 1 out of 6 hospital beds in the nation. The global and national church has been very active in its opposition to abortion and its advocacy for policies to address climate change.

But so far, the church has no official channel for expressing those views to the White House, Wuerl said on Thursday. He hasn’t heard anything about a White House office for faith-based programs, which presidents Obama and Bush each used to communicate with religious organizations.

“I think it’s an important structure, so that there’s somebody in the administration we religious can go to,” he said. But he said it was too early to tell whether Trump would appoint someone to lead a faith-based office, or which religious figures might gain the ear of the president and his advisers.

Wuerl also discussed with Post editors the resignation of Marie Collins, a prominent figure in the Vatican who survived sexual abuse by a priest, from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors.

Collins said in a scathing statement Wednesday that she was quitting the committee on preventing clergy sexual abuse because she was frustrated by Vatican officials’ reluctance to fix the problem. Some officials refused to even reply to letters from people who said they were victims of abuse, Collins claimed.

But Wuerl was not alarmed by that statement. “I think a lot has been done. An enormous amount has been done. I’m not sure, does every letter that comes in get a response?” he said.

Pope Francis had agreed in 2015 to set up a tribunal that would investigate whether bishops were negligent in addressing abuse in their dioceses, but the tribunal has not come to be. That also did not trouble Wuerl, who suggested that bishops might be removed from their prominent positions because they covered up abuse, but without anyone knowing why they were demoted. “It’s not the style of the Holy See, if they remove someone, to have a news conference. It’s just not the style,” he said.

He emphasized that the goal of the Washington archdiocese, and the church elsewhere, is to take a zero-tolerance approach toward abusers, so that no one who has abused a minor remains in ministry.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/03/02/cardinal-wuerl-voices-catholic-support-for-immigrants-but-urges-caution-about-sanctuary-churches/?utm_term=.8261cb28f4f2

The Vatican drags its feet on accountability for clergy sex abuse

By Editorial Board

The Washington Post

March 12, 2017

WHEN POPE Francis established a commission in 2014 to address sexual abuse by clergy members, he picked two survivors, victims themselves, to serve on the 17-member panel. Now, three years later, both are gone, having denounced foot-dragging and official intransigence inside the Vatican.

The fact that no survivors now serve as active members of Francis's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors is a measure of the Holy See's resistance to change, and of its apparent inability to come to terms with the moral challenge posed by pedophile priests and bishops who enabled them. Sadly, the resignation this month from the commission of one survivor, which followed the forced ouster a year earlier of another, is only one among the more recent indications that the pope's public pledges of zero tolerance for abuse and expressions of sympathy for victims are unmatched by institutional transformation.

In 2015, it was the pontifical commission that recommended establishing a tribunal to hold accountable bishops who turned a blind eye to abuse within their dioceses by shuffling abusive priests from parish to parish. Francis adopted the recommendation, then dropped it a year later in the face of bureaucratic impediments. He said bishops would be dealt with under existing Vatican rules, but none have been explicitly disciplined for negligence involving sexual abuse.

Marie Collins, the survivor who resigned from the commission this month, was widely respected as a potent moral voice for reform. Her frustration was evident in a statement she gave to the National Catholic Reporter, in which she detailed how even minor steps toward reform, urged by the commission and adopted by Francis, have been met with official contempt. Among ignored recommendations is one that every victim of abuse who contacts the Vatican should receive a response.

"I find it impossible to listen to public statements about the deep concern in the church for the care of those whose lives have been blighted by abuse, yet to watch privately as a congregation in the Vatican refuses to even acknowledge their letters!" wrote Ms. Collins, who is Irish. "It is a reflection of how this whole abuse crisis in the Church has been handled: with fine words in public and contrary actions behind closed doors."

Among the last straws for Ms. Collins was that Francis, despite his zero-tolerance policy, quietly eased discipline for some abusive clergymen, allowing them to remain in the priesthood, albeit without ministering to congregants, rather than defrocking them.

In a meeting this month with Washington Post reporters and editors, Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington said the church has embraced reforms, dismissing as "secondary" the question of whether the church publicly disciplines negligent bishops and abusive clergymen. In fact, clear and convincing accountability is central to reform.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-vatican-drags-its-feet-on-clergy-sex-abuse/2017/03/12/1efaf566-0443-11e7-b1e9-a05d3c21f7cf_story.html?utm_term=.f20d44195043

Prompt Reporting and Action is Crucial in Child Protection

By Cardinal Donald Wuerl

The Cardinal's Blog – Seek First the Kingdom

April 3, 2017

April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. This time is dedicated to finding ways to ensure that young people are in safe environments wherever they are and to provide help and care to those who have suffered abuse.

Previously, I have discussed how the Archdiocese of Washington has long been strongly committed to child safety, which is demonstrated by all of the archdiocese's many pro-active efforts to protect our precious children and to help those who have been victimized to heal. This includes mandatory child protection education and training for staff, volunteers and children, criminal background checks, assistance for any person who indicates that he or she has been abused, and much more.

To emphasize how gravely serious and vigilant the archdiocese is in protecting children and rooting out perpetrators of abuse, I would like here to highlight our archdiocesan policy and practices that recognize the vital need for swift remedial action whenever there is reason to believe or suspect abuse has occurred. Under this policy, any suspected abuse is required to be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate civil authorities and archdiocesan authorities. When archdiocesan personnel receive allegations of suspected inappropriate contact or conduct, they act swiftly to provide immediate protective measures, as well as work for a speedy and just resolution. This means offering care and support to alleged victims, placing the accused on administrative leave pending final resolution, working with civil authorities, cooperating in any judicial proceedings, and other appropriate action.

Timely response to allegations, and prompt investigation and resolution of any wrongdoing is crucial, but particularly regarding the scourge of child sexual abuse, where prompt adjudication is to the benefit of all concerned. Experience shows that justice delayed is justice denied; thus, the law has long stressed that claims be quickly brought. While some people have suggested that public policy should allow for delay, not only is there is no good reason for victims to not obtain help as soon as possible, the failure to inform the appropriate authorities about suspected abuse places other children at risk of grievous harm themselves because the perpetrator is not removed.

If abuse involving archdiocesan personnel has occurred, whenever and wherever it has occurred, we want to know about it as quickly as possible so that we can take appropriate action. Most importantly, if you have been a victim of child sexual abuse, you are urged to contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection at 301-853-5328 so you may get the assistance you need and so that other children might be protected.

Being most vulnerable, our young people require us to care for them and protect them from harm. Please join all of us in being vigilant in providing a safe environment for all children.

<http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2017/04/prompt-reporting-action-crucial-child-protection/>

At Holy Week Mass, Cardinal Wuerl prays for abuse survivors, urges solidarity with victims of Coptic church bombings

Catholic Standard

April 12, 2017

During an April 11 Mass for healing of abuse victims, Cardinal Donald Wuerl offered prayers for victims of such abuse, reiterated the Archdiocese of Washington's commitment to keep children safe and offered sympathy and solidarity to victims of the recent Coptic church bombings in Egypt.

Cardinal Wuerl – offering the Mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle on the Tuesday of Holy Week – said it was appropriate to celebrate the Mass “during the first three days of Holy Week when the Gospel focuses on human failure and our need for God's gracious mercy.”

The cardinal said the Gospel reading at the Mass, in which Jesus at the Last Supper announces Judas's betrayal, shows “the tragic consequences of giving into human frailty” and the “betrayal, failure, pain and sorrow” that ensues.

About 60 people – including members of the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Advisory Board – attended the Mass that was concelebrated by Washington Auxiliary Bishop Barry Knestout; Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson, rector of the cathedral; and several other priests.

Noting that April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month, Cardinal Wuerl said that the Archdiocese of Washington takes seriously its obligation “to make sure young people are always in a safe environment.”

“The archdiocese is strongly committed to child safety in our Church and in our society,” he stressed, noting that since 1986 the archdiocese has had “a strong, comprehensive policy in place to see to it that children are safe everywhere.”

The policy referred to by Cardinal Wuerl is the Archdiocese of Washington's Child Protection Policy. When the Archdiocese of Washington instituted that policy more than 30 years ago, it was one of the first dioceses in the United States to do so. The policy mandates the reporting of abuse allegations to civil authorities, assisting those who have been harmed, and extensive education and training on how to prevent and identify mistreatment of children and youth.

It also requires a thorough background check for all employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children. The policy requires two forms of background checks – electronic background checks and fingerprinting – on employees, clergy, volunteers and anyone else who works with young people.

The archdiocesan Child Protection Policy is considered one of the strongest in the nation.

Cardinal Wuerl said that the Church, as well as the entire nation, “must take steps to avoid it (harming children) and to heal it where it has occurred.”

He lamented “the great wrong perpetuated against (young people) due to psychological, physical and sexual abuse.” Calling young people “among the most vulnerable” in our society, Cardinal Wuerl stressed that “they require us to care for them and to be attentive to them.”

At the end of the Mass, Cardinal Wuerl again repeated his condemnation of the April 9 bombings of two Coptic churches in Egypt that killed at least 44 people and injured more than 100 others. He called the attacks “a terrible, terrible tragedy” and offered “solidarity with our Coptic brothers and sisters.”

Cardinal Wuerl also read a letter that he and other leaders from Washington area faith communities and the Interfaith Conference of Washington signed and sent to local Coptic churches and priests. The signers of the statement included leaders from Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Episcopal and Presbyterian faith communities.

Expressing “our deepest sympathy for all those whose lives were lost or forever changed due to the Palm Sunday attacks in Egypt,” the letter noted that the faith leaders consider “an attack on one community of faith is an attack on all, and we offer our prayers for God’s mercy and justice.

“The disturbing news of another attack on Christians, this time Coptic worshippers in Egypt, calls us together so that we might, through the faith traditions represented in this statement, denounce violence but particularly violence perpetrated in the name of religion,” the letter read. “In this week, called holy by Christians around the world, we join in solidarity in decrying this violent attack.”

“We step forward to stand with our Coptic Christian brothers and sisters and with Christians around the world, so that they do not have to carry their cross alone,” the letter said. Cardinal Wuerl urged those at the Mass “to stand with our Coptic brothers and sisters” and help them “by our prayers, by our support and by our solidarity.”

<http://cathstan.org/Content/News/Cardinal-Wuerl/Article/At-Holy-Week-Mass-Cardinal-Wuerl-prays-for-abuse-survivors-urges-solidarity-with-victims-of-Coptic-church-bombings/2/410/7743>

Throwback Thursday: Child Abuse Prevention Month and Protecting the Innocent and Vulnerable Among Us

By Cardinal Donald Wuerl

The Cardinal's Blog – Seek First the Kingdom

April 12, 2018

Children are precious. Their simplicity, their sense of wonder and enthusiasm, their laughter at play are all infectious. Their innate way of receiving and giving tenderness, their way of seeing reality with a trusting and pure gaze, cannot fail to touch our hearts and fill us with hope for tomorrow, Pope Francis has observed.

Children are truly a gift. Yet, as with all else in this fallen world, young people are subject to the human condition. Some are raised in poverty and poor living conditions despite the best efforts of their parents. But others have had grave wrongs perpetrated against them, including physical, mental, emotional and/or sexual abuse.

To draw attention to this evil and what we can do about it, April is National Child Abuse Prevention Month. During this month, government agencies, community groups, and churches are encouraged to work together to share child abuse and neglect prevention strategies and promote the well-being of children and families. This responsibility belongs to everyone as a matter of charity and justice, and the Archdiocese of Washington is strongly committed to child safety in the Church and throughout society.

“Concern for the child, even before birth, from the first moment of conception and then throughout the years of infancy and youth is the primary and fundamental test of the relationship of one human being to another,” said Saint John Paul II in an address to the United Nations (*Familiaris Consortio*, 26). We can all do our part to protect the dignity of all human life and ensure our children are in safe environments at home, at school, in our neighborhoods, and at church.

Our local Church has long been pro-active in protecting children. Since 1986, the archdiocese has had a stringent written policy on child protection, one of the most comprehensive of any organization – public or private – in Maryland or the District of Columbia entrusted with the care of children. This policy mandates reporting of suspected abuse to civil authorities, education for children and adults, and background checks for clergy, employees and volunteers who work with minors. Also included is information on healing for those harmed and what to do if there is an allegation. These efforts are overseen by a Child Protection Advisory Board of predominantly lay experts.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has a variety of child abuse prevention resources on its website. The archdiocese has also developed a series of safety tips, including advice on Internet safety, sexting, healthy teen relationships, and bullying. Children in archdiocesan schools and religious education programs are also taught how to recognize abuse and protect themselves.

Our efforts to combat child abuse begin with ourselves, with our own families in our own homes, including our spiritual family. The Catechism reminds parents they have an obligation to love

and care for the children that are entrusted to them by our heavenly Father (CCC 2221-31). Likewise, the Church that is our Mother has an obligation toward our little ones.

“Families need to know that the Church is making every effort to protect their children. They should also know that they have every right to turn to the Church with full confidence, for it is a safe and secure home,” Pope Francis has emphasized. Most especially, “everything possible must be done to rid the Church of the scourge of the sexual abuse of minors and to open pathways of reconciliation and healing for those who were abused.”

Being most vulnerable, our young people require us to care for them and protect them from harm. Child Abuse Prevention Month calls our attention to this obligation in charity and justice. Let us all be vigilant in helping to provide a safe environment for all children and to help those who are victims of abuse find healing.

<http://cardinalsblog.adw.org/2018/04/throwback-thursday-child-abuse-prevention-month-protecting-innocent-vulnerable-among-us/>

Sex-abuse report looms over Catholic dioceses

By Peter Smith

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

April 16, 2018

Since July 2016, a grand jury seated in Pittsburgh has been quietly hearing testimony on alleged rape and sexual abuse of children by priests and others associated with the Roman Catholic Church.

The scope of the investigation spans seven decades and from one end of Pennsylvania to the other.

What is expected in the coming weeks is a report that could be the most comprehensive and geographically expansive official report ever produced in the United States on the enormity of the scandal.

The 40th Statewide Grand Jury had an 18-month term, extended by four months to the end of April, according to those familiar with its work.

Rosendo Dacal, a suspended Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh deacon, gets out of his car with his attorney, Robert Del Greco Jr., right, as he arrives Monday morning for his preliminary hearing in front of North Strabane District Judge Jay Weller on charges of unlawful contact with a minor and other offenses.

Attorney General Josh Shapiro is refusing to confirm anything about the grand jury beyond the single indictment it has yielded so far — that of a Greensburg priest, the Rev. John Sweeney, who faces a June trial on a charge of sexually abusing a 10-year-old boy in the 1990s.

But if the past is any indication, the investigation is likely to yield a report horrific in detail and blistering in its censure of church authorities who may have failed to protect victims as far back as the mid-20th century.

Two years ago, a previous grand jury investigating the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown reported “staggering and sobering” findings that about 50 priests and other church workers molested hundreds of children, most of the incidents occurring in the mid- and late 20th century. It faulted bishops for failing to respond adequately.

Many of the accused are dead, and some of those living denied the charges. Because of the passage of time, no alleged abuser was criminally charged.

A related report did lead to indictments of two Franciscan superiors on charges of failing to protect children from an abusive friar. Their Blair County trial is scheduled for next month.

Altoona-Johnstown is the smallest Catholic diocese in the state. The six dioceses that are known to be under investigation have a combined Catholic population at least 15 times as large.

The current grand jury subpoenaed records from the dioceses of Pittsburgh, Greensburg, Allentown, Scranton, Harrisburg and Erie. The Erie diocese pre-emptively released a list this month of 51 priests and others credibly accused of abuse.

Using those numbers as a baseline, it would not be surprising if the statewide report lists hundreds of perpetrators.

(The Archdiocese of Philadelphia, already the subject of withering grand jury reports in years past, is not expected to be a focus here.)

Although some grand juries and state attorneys general have done intensive investigations of particular dioceses, victims' advocates say the multi-diocese investigation in Pennsylvania is unique in this country.

"I think it's going to be bad," said Terence McKiernan, president of BishopAccountability.org, a victims' advocacy group. "It's good that we're going to learn more, but it's sad."

The closest parallel, he and others said, is in Australia, where a commission reported last year that tens of thousands of children suffered abuse over decades in churches — Catholic and otherwise — as well as religious and secular schools and institutions.

Attorney General Shapiro restricted his public comments to the pending cases of Father Sweeney and the Franciscans.

"I just continue to be so impressed by those victims who are raising their voices," Mr. Shapiro said. "I hear them, I believe them."

Pittsburgh Bishop David Zubik said the diocese has cooperated with the investigation, including turning over any files that pertained to the sexual abuse of children.

"I'm just hoping we're going to get a fair hearing, and most important of all, what's going to happen is going to be constructive and helpful to victims," Bishop Zubik said.

His concern, he said, is whether people will "be making judgments on decisions that were made 20 or 30 years ago based on what the expectations are in 2018."

He added: "Obviously people's understanding over what has happened over the course of all these years has changed across society."

He said grand juries would find similar results if they looked at other institutions.

"Especially in southwestern Pennsylvania, picking up the newspapers over the last couple of years, [one sees] these same issues certainly within the context of public schools," he said. "And now it's spreading into other venues as well."

Bishop Zubik credited his predecessor, Cardinal Donald Wuerl, now archbishop of Washington, D.C., with instituting policies that barred abusers from ministry years before such became the national standard.

The diocese's current approach was evident last week when a deacon was arrested in a police sting, unrelated to the grand jury, and charged with unlawful contact with a minor.

The diocese immediately suspended him and notified news media and the parishioners where he worked.

Mike Manko, spokesman for Allegheny County District Attorney Steve Zappala, said that under Cardinal Wuerl and Bishop Zubik, "the diocese has never failed to quickly and fully inform our office when they have discovered credible evidence of potential criminal and abusive behavior."

Given its history of cooperation, Nick Cafardi — a former chairman of the U.S. bishops' National Review Board for the protection of minors — said he doesn't expect major surprises from Pittsburgh in the grand jury report.

As for the other dioceses, "I pray that none of them followed Philadelphia's lead, because Philadelphia set the standard for how not to handle the crisis," Mr. Cafardi, dean emeritus at the Duquesne University School of Law, said via email. "Unfortunately, among the Pennsylvania dioceses, Philadelphia has always been extremely influential for better or for worse."

Victims' advocate Robert Hoatson said he has spoken to victims who have testified to the Pennsylvania grand jury.

"It's going to be a devastating report for the Catholic Church and it's going to point out not only the extent of sexual abuse of children but the massive cover-up by the hierarchy," Mr. Hoatson, president of the group Road to Recovery, predicted.

"My only fear is that nobody will be indicted as a result" because of offenses that happened too long ago to be prosecuted under the statute of limitations, Mr. Hoatson said.

State Rep. Mark Rozzi, D-Berks, said he testified to the grand jury about being sexually abused as a boy in the Allentown diocese by the late Rev. Edward Graff, who died in 2002 as dozens of allegations of abuse poured in.

Mr. Rozzi hopes the forthcoming report would help people understand the basis for his proposed legislation that would open a two-year window for people who allege child sexual abuse in the past to take legal action.

That legislation, pushed in the wake of the Altoona-Johnstown report, fell short last year amid fierce resistance by Catholic leaders who said it would financially devastate schools, charities and other ministries, hurting people who were not at fault.

But Mr. Rozzi said claimants would still have to convince a court of their claims.

“A lot of these are older, so it’s going to be a little tougher” he said. “But at the end of the day that’s what victims want, to go into court and say, ‘This happened to me and someone’s going to have to be accountable.’ “

Another witness, former priest James Faluszczyk of Buffalo, N.Y., said he came to Pittsburgh to testify before the grand jury about being molested as a boy by a priest in the Erie diocese.

“My hopes are that they uncover not just individual perpetrators and their victims, but that the grand jury more than anything uncovers the conspiracy that the church has engaged in for multiple decades,” he said.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/local/region/2018/04/16/Grand-jury-report-Catholic-dioceses-Pittsburgh-pennsylvania-priests-sex-abuse-josh-shapiro/stories/201804140014>

At cathedral Mass, cardinal prays for survivors of abuse

By Richard Szczepanowski

Catholic Standard

April 23, 2018

Cardinal Donald Wuerl celebrated an April 19 Mass at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle to pray for survivors of abuse and “to draw attention to this evil that persists in our society.”

“We come together at this very special Mass to pray for the healing of victims of abuse,” Cardinal Wuerl said. “The Church has made a strong and concerted effort over the past years to do two things: to make sure that it is rooted out in the Church, [and to] [pray for anyone suffering](#) as a result of it. That’s what brings us here to this Mass today.”

The Mass was offered during the April observance of National Child Abuse Prevention Month. The cardinal lamented that “even with the gift of Baptism ... and even with the benefit of God’s Word and God’s grace, there continues to be human failure.”

The cardinal also noted that there is healing and renewal in God’s grace, and asked that the faithful pray for survivors of abuse.

“We live in the Baptism of the Lord, we experience that new life in Christ, and we are called always to live that to the very best of our ability and with compassion and love, to see those around us who need that care... so that there is always, in this Church, a sense of healing,” he said.

Cardinal Wuerl also reminded those at the Mass at the Archdiocese of Washington takes seriously allegations of abuse and has a rigid child protection policy.

“Here in this Archdiocese, we can be very proud of the fact that we have had in place good policies, but nonetheless we always have to be aware of those who suffer any type of abuse,” he said.

Those policies the cardinal referred to are outlined in the Archdiocese of Washington’s Child Protection Policy that has been in effect in this archdiocese for more than 30 years.

When the Archdiocese of Washington instituted that policy in 1986, it was one of the first dioceses in the United States to do so. The policy mandates the reporting of abuse allegations to civil authorities, assisting those who have been harmed, and extensive education and training on how to prevent and identify mistreatment of children and youth.

It also requires a thorough background check for all employees and volunteers who have substantial contact with children. The policy requires two forms of background checks – electronic background checks and fingerprinting – on employees, clergy, volunteers and anyone else who works with young people.

The Archdiocese of Washington also makes resources and information about protecting children available online at www.adw.org/childprotection. There, parents will find information on the archdiocese's child protection efforts, safety tips, how to recognize Internet and cyber bullying and other information.

In addition to that policy, the archdiocese has a [Child Protection Advisory Board](#) of predominantly lay experts that advises on and monitors compliance with child protection efforts. The archdiocese also has an established Office of Child Protection.

Courtney Chase, director of the Office of Child Protection, noted that members of the Child Protection Advisory Board were invited to attend the Mass because "our child protection office focuses on all aspects of the healing process (for survivors of abuse), of which prayer is an integral part."

"This Mass is a time for reflection and a renewal of our commitment to the healing of all survivors of abuse and their families," Chase said. "Our faith teaches us to turn to God when we are wounded. This Mass sends a message to survivors that they do not have the burden of carrying their cross alone – we are with them."

<http://cathstan.org/Content/Default/Mobile-Master/Article/At-cathedral-Mass-cardinal-prays-for-survivors-of-abuse/-3/-7/8414>

Trail of trauma: Grand jury report expected to shed more light on sexual abuse in dioceses

By Peter Smith

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

May 14, 2018

A 1983 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette feature article opens with heart-warming words that — 35 years later — now chill the blood:

“The Rev. Lawrence A. O’Connell, pastor of St. Gabriel of the Sorrowful Virgin Church in Whitehall, wishes only to live out his remaining years near his beloved elementary school and its children.”

The longtime parish pastor, officially retiring at age 77, said he hoped “to remain here to teach religion and stay active with the children. ... I used to greet them all as they came in the door.”

O’Connell died of a heart attack in 1986, his public good name intact.

In 2004, a different narrative emerged.

That year, two women sued the Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh to say that in those hallway greetings when they were young students in the 1950s and 1960s, O’Connell would for years put his arms around them, fondle their breasts and force them to kiss him.

A third plaintiff said when she was between 12 and 15 and she had a job at the church, O’Connell would regularly fondle her breasts and genitals and those of two other girls forced to watch each others’ abuse. They and victims of other priests settled their lawsuits with the Diocese of Pittsburgh in 2007.

Horror stories like these have emerged the world over for more than three decades now, of Roman Catholic priests and others associated with the church exploiting their positions of trust to gain access to children they would molest.

Often, such priests stayed in ministry under knowing bishops and other church higher-ups who put a premium on minimizing scandal and often thought that predators’ criminal impulses could be controlled through spiritual or therapeutic means.

It was 1984 that the first such scandal of not just an abusive priest but of an enabling bishop erupted in Louisiana. By 2002, the scandal reached a global crisis ignited by revelations in Boston that are chronicled in the Oscar-winning 2015 movie “Spotlight.”

By now, it may seem there’s little more to reveal.

But a statewide grand jury is testing that proposition.

The grand jury, believed to have concluded its work at the end of April, has spent nearly two years investigating Pittsburgh's and five other Roman Catholic dioceses across the width of Pennsylvania.

There's no telling when, or even if, the grand jury will take further actions beyond its indictments so far of one priest each in the dioceses of Erie and Greensburg.

But it could offer the most complete look ever into the extent of past abuse in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, which covers six southwestern Pennsylvania counties, and other dioceses.

It could answer basic questions still unknown. We know many of the abusers' names, but we don't know all of them or how many. We know how church officials responded in some cases, but not others.

To date, the most comprehensive report on Pittsburgh came in 2004, when then-Bishop Donald Wuerl reported that the diocese had received credible claims of abuse against 45 priests and deacons between 1950 and 2002 — or just under 2 percent of the more than 2,200 who served in the diocese in that time.

That report came in conjunction with a national survey conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, which found a 4 percent rate of alleged offending clerics across the country.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh did not identify the 45 clerics. Some were already named in court documents.

But as of May 2018, the total number of Pittsburgh clerics publicly known by name to be credibly accused of sexual misconduct with a minor still doesn't come close to 45.

Bishop David Zubik has declined to publish a list similar to Erie's, saying the Pittsburgh diocese's longstanding approach has worked successfully, including zero-tolerance for abusers and, when an allegation arises, automatically placing the accused on leave, cooperating with law enforcement and notifying parishioners and others where the person is assigned.

A wide-ranging search of Post-Gazette archives, court documents and a watchdog group's website, BishopAccountability.org, has found a total of 44 people associated with the church who are accused of sexual or other egregious misconduct with minors.

Those 44 names include cases that emerged since 2004.

And it includes not only priests and deacons but also religious brothers and one sister, a wider category than in the 2004 report. And it includes some cases with virtually no public details, making it difficult to assess whether they reach a basic threshold of credibility.

Others cases are solid: criminal convictions, multiple witnesses or other corroboration.

The accused range from the likes of O’Connell, who allegedly carried on his predations for years at one parish beginning in the 1950s, through various headline-grabbing scandals all the way through April 2018, when the diocese suspended a deacon upon his arrest for charges involving alleged child pornography and unlawful contact with a minor via the Internet.

If another recent grand jury offers any precedent, we will soon learn a much fuller picture of the scandal in Pittsburgh, which has often been seen as a national model for taking a hard line on abusers more than a decade before bishops adopted a nationwide zero-tolerance policy in 2002.

The attorney general’s office, working with the grand jury, has subpoenaed internal records dating as far back as 1947 from six dioceses.

A likely precedent is a 2016 statewide grand jury report on the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, which identified at least 50 priests and other church workers accused of sexual abuse since the mid-20th century. Many of the accused had not previously been named; most were dead, and some of the living disputed the claims.

Anticipating the current grand jury’s report, the Diocese of Erie last month released a list of 51 people — 34 priests and 17 others — credibly accused of abuse or failing to prevent it within its 13 northwestern Pennsylvania counties.

In both cases, the dioceses’ numbers were significantly higher than previously known.

Between the John Jay report and annual church reports since then, nearly 6 percent of priests and deacons serving since 1950 have been accused, according to calculations by BishopAccountability.org. Such percentages rise to as high as 9 or 10 percent in dioceses whose documents have been extensively exposed through court cases, such as in Covington, Ky. and Manchester, N.H.

On the other hand, Erie’s most recent list would still put it at no more than 3 percent.

“We know from the first John Jay report in 2004 that the abuse was homogenous across regions, so that’s at least a little evidence that we really shouldn’t expect peaks and valleys in these data,” said Terry McKiernan, founder of BishopAccountability.org. “Two percent would surprise me in any diocese.”

The Diocese of Pittsburgh and Cardinal Wuerl declined to comment for this story, citing the pending grand jury deliberations.

More than a decade ago, 32 people sued the Pittsburgh diocese, alleging abuse by 17 priests across the second half of the 20th century. Because of a strict statute of limitations, not only did they settle for a relatively small amount in 2007 — \$1.25 million — but they could not obtain the church documents, which the grand jury now has, as evidence of how bishops handled abuse.

Regardless of numbers, the trail of human devastation caused by abuse spans decades.

It often takes years or decades for a victim to come to terms with his or her abuse, but several plaintiffs and others in recent years have reported abuse by local clerics as far back as the mid-20th century.

One case did emerge spectacularly into public view in 1969. Pittsburgh police, acting on a tip, raided the Squirrel Hill apartment of the Rev. Richard Ginder and found a large cache of child pornography and incriminating diary entries.

Ginder, a nationally known Catholic journalist, pleaded guilty, got probation and psychiatric treatment and finally got himself suspended from ministry by Bishop Vincent Leonard in 1976 — not for criminal acts but for publishing a challenge to the church bans on such things as homosexuality, premarital sex and artificial birth control.

Ginder was convicted again in 1978 for molesting two teen boys, sentenced to prison and in 1984 died in a car crash.

Another public case emerged in 1978, when the Rev. Anthony Cipolla was charged with molesting a boy in a North Side parish. The boy's mother later testified in a separate lawsuit that she dropped the charges under heavy pressure from Bishop Leonard and a lawyer claiming to represent the church.

Cipolla went on to molest a teen seminarian for years and became a signature case for the diocese's tougher policy on abuse. In the 1990s, after Cipolla secured a Vatican ruling to return him to ministry, then-Bishop Wuerl successfully appealed and retained the ban. Cipolla died in 2016.

Now-Cardinal Wuerl of Washington and others have long cited another case as pivotal to changing his and the diocese's approach to abuse.

After three priests were arrested in 1988 for molesting two brothers in a notorious case that drew a lawsuit from the family, Bishop Wuerl met with the parents and came away convinced of the need to take a hard line on abusers.

Two of the priests, Robert Wolk and Richard Zula, were convicted and removed from the priesthood. A third, Francis Pucci, had charges dropped on a technicality and was restricted to ministry at a convent until his death in 2002.

That year, U.S. bishops and the Vatican finally codified law that entirely banned abusers from ministry for one or more offenses. Also in 2002, Bishop Wuerl removed several more unnamed priests from ministry after reviewing their files amid the global scandal unleashed by the "Spotlight" revelations in Boston.

Several other criminal cases emerged before and after that, from a school headmaster to several parish priests on charges ranging from corruption of a minor to child pornography.

In 2014, a cascade of revelations emerged from just one institution, North Catholic High School, which operated in Troy Hill for much of the 20th century. More than 20 people alleged abuse by nine Marianist brothers who had staffed the school between the 1940s and 1990s, the diocese acknowledged.

Details in many cases are sketchy, but one of the brothers, Ralph Mravintz, pleaded guilty to disorderly conduct in 1986 after originally being charged with corrupting a minor — a boy who sought extra help on his algebra. Another, Bernard Hartman, just completed a two-year prison sentence in Australia, where he taught between stints at North Catholic.

In 2005, the public got a glimpse of what the current grand jury might be looking at when an earlier grand jury report on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia grand jury obtained Pittsburgh records because Philadelphia Archbishop Anthony Bevilacqua, who had been bishop of Pittsburgh from 1983 to 1988, had found assignments for a New Jersey priest arrested on an abuse charge in that state. That priest, John P. Connor, worked in Pittsburgh and later in Philadelphia.

Taking on a problematic priest from another diocese was a case of “bishops helping bishops,” a reluctant Pittsburgh diocesan official wrote in an internal document. Bishop Bevilacqua himself wrote, “I cannot guarantee that there is no serious risk.”

It was an ominous admission. In 2015, the Diocese of Pittsburgh reached a settlement with a man who said he was abused here by Connor.

<http://www.post-gazette.com/news/faith-religion/2018/05/14/Trail-of-trauma-Abuse-Catholic-priests-Pittsburgh-statewide-grand-jury-bishops-attorney-general-josh-shapiro/stories/201805120008>