



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Further shame for Roman Catholicism in North America



Bishop O'Brien

Roman Catholic bishop guilty of hit-and-run

Roman Catholic bishop, Thomas O'Brien, has been found guilty of leaving the scene of a fatal hit-and-run incident. The conviction makes him the first Roman Catholic bishop in US history to be convicted of a felony. concealed

The Bishop of Phoenix, Arizona, left his post shortly after his arrest last June, though no specific reason for his decision was given at the time. He faces up to four years in jail over the incident, which caused the death of 43-year-old carpenter Jim Reed. He was not charged with causing the crash, however, because the pedestrian was not obey-

ing traffic rules. The 12-person jury took five days to reach a decision.

Correspondents say family members of both the victim and the accused wept when the verdict was read to the packed courtroom, but O'Brien himself did not react to the decision. During the trial, he had argued that he did not see his victim and thought that a dog or a rock had hit his car. Prosecutors said he must have realised he had hit a person. The accident happened less than two weeks after the former bishop relinquished some of his authority, in a deal to avoid being indicted for allegedly sheltering molesters among the clergy in a sex abuse case.

Ten thousand abuse victims

News of the bishop's case broke at the same time as figures showing that perverted Roman Catholic priests in the US have left some 10,000 victims in the wake of their wickedness. (See BBC site: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/3491926.stm>) About 4% of Catholic priests have been accused of sexually abusing minors over the past half-century, according to a draft of the first comprehensive study of sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The percentage is higher than many people, including church officials, had anticipated. The draft of the study, carried out by John Jay College of Criminal Justice, for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, found that 4,450 of the 110,000 priests who served between 1950 and 2002 were accused of sexual abuse of minors, according to CNN, which reported yesterday that it had reviewed the draft. The number of alleged perpetrators given in the draft study is higher than the tallies by news media outlets, including the Associated Press and The New York Times, that have tried to count reported allegations nationwide.

False claim

The number is also higher than that projected by church officials. A top Vatican official, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger said in 2002, according to the Catholic News Service: "In the United States, there is constant news on this topic, but less than 1 percent of priests are guilty of acts of this type."

The true figure is fourfold the Vatican claim.



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One of the best known victims of abuse by a priest has died in Boston. Patrick McSorley, a victim of defrocked priest John J. Geoghan, and who became one of the most visible critics of clergy sexual abuse, was discovered dead early on February 23rd in a North End apartment.

Boston police would not provide details about McSorley's death, except to say that authorities arrived at the apartment shortly after 1.00 am. A close friend said McSorley, 29, occasionally went to the apartment to take drugs, owing to a chronic substance-abuse problem that had plagued him for several years. "To think he had come this far and just to have it end so abruptly — it's a tragic ending," said the friend, Alexa MacPherson, 29, also a victim of clergy sex abuse. "Many of us try to forget the memories. His choice of action was to drink and to use drugs to try to escape the pains that he felt and the memories that he had." McSorley said that Geoghan, who was killed in prison last year, molested him when he was 12 years old. The priest had visited the family's home to offer condolences after the suicide of his father.

"It's something that you never get over," MacPherson said. "Once it happens to you, it's with you for the rest of your life, and that's an unfortunate fact." McSorley leaves a young son and had been living in Dorchester, said his lawyer, Mitchell Garabedian. He and 85 other plaintiffs received a combined \$10 million settlement from the Boston Archdiocese in 2002. His share was nearly \$200,000, according to a source who knew him.

Patrick McSorley became a vocal and angry critic of the archdiocese's handling of the settlement negotiations and often appeared at news conferences about the explosive clergy-abuse scandal. He directed some of his harshest criticism at the archdiocese's past practices of transferring abusive priests among its parishes, instead of removing them from positions in which they could interact with children.

In Canada, plans to test all applicants to the Roman Catholic priesthood for HIV are not an attack on homosexuals, a Canadian Cardinal has stated. "It's not only a profession, a job that we take for a few months or few years," he said at a news conference. "For me the criteria is not what is your sexual orientation but what is your capacity to maintain, with God's help, interpersonal relationships within the celibate commitment." "People ask the church to be very severe in the choosing of their priests because of some scandals that happened, especially in the United States," Turcotte said.

Comment.

What an indictment of the morality of Roman Catholicism it is that such a "health" check on prospective priests must be carried out! For the Canadian Cardinal to acknowledge that their parishioners have asked the "church to be very severe in the choosing of their priests" indicates the slowness of the hierarchy to take adequate measures to screen candidates, since they had to be urged to act by their laity. Again, that the people should recognise that there is a likelihood of promiscuous characters entering the priesthood denotes a gullibility that is beyond the comprehension of a rational person. Who would submit to the medical care of a doctor who might have AIDS? Why then do people submit to the spiritual oversight of those who may indulge in the grossest of sins; that which is utterly condemned by the God these so-called priests profess to serve? The enigma of Roman Catholicism and the loyalty of those who remain within its ranks defy rational explanation.