

Department of Human Resources  
**CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIVISION**

Child Protective Services Branch

1031 E. BURNSIDE, PORTLAND, OREGON 97214-1380 PHONE (503) 238-7555

JULY 1, 1983

C O N F I D E N T I A L

Mr. Mike Schrunk, District Attorney  
Room 600  
Multnomah County Courthouse  
1021 SW 4th Avenue  
Portland, Oregon 97204

RE: FATHER THOMAS B. LAUGHLIN  
PPB# 83-42629 (Key #)  
Also 83-46854, 83-46855  
83-48966, 83-48967

Dear Mr. Schrunk,

I am writing to you in response to the above identified case, handled by Riley Atkins of your office and Detective Gary Sussman of Portland Police Bureau Special Services Detectives. It is my understanding that issues related to Father Laughlin's "criminal" proceedings and sentencing are essentially complete (sentencing set for 8-17-83). With that as a base I would appreciate some indication from you, as to how the District Attorney's office anticipates responding to the substantial lack of reporting on the part of Archbishop Power, Father Jacobberger and Sister Kennedy of this long running sexual offense pattern by Father Laughlin against young boys.

Father Laughlin's behavior, as indicated in Detective Sussman's reports, first came to the attention of Archbishop Power (83-46855) in March of 1981. The incident was reported by a victim and his parents. On another occasion, Sister Antoinette Kennedy (83-42629) of Central Catholic High School in February of 1982, who indicated she would speak (had spoken) to the Archbishop about the matter. Additionally, Father Jacobberger (83-42629) of the Archdiocese had been contacted by Sister Kennedy and he indicated he had communicated with the Archbishop via a personal letter and that to his knowledge, the Archbishop had spoken with Father Laughlin.

In all of these activities, none of the people called Child Protective Services or for that matter any law enforcement official (ORS 418.740-775) as required by law. I am very concerned that this occurred, particularly, in light of Father Laughlin's classically pedophile and predatory behavior. No where in Detective Sussman's reports nor in my conversation with Mr. Atkins, does there seem to be any indication of awareness on the part of the Archdiocese staff of their failure to report and more seriously, the enormity of the victimization that was allowed to occur and reoccur as a direct result of their failures. That the Archbishop would have allowed this behavior on Father Laughlin's part to remain unattended from March of 1981 to January 1982, and then until spring of 1983 is to me a significant violation of the child abuse reporting law.

PD 0081

Mr. Mike Sch. J  
RE: Father Thomas B. Laughlin  
July 1, 1983  
Page 2

C O N F I D E N T I A L

You sense, I'm sure, my concern about this whole series of incidents and the Archdiocese's response. Our efforts, in collaboration with your office and others, has been focused at immediate and responsible reporting of child abuse and neglect allegations, to prevent the ongoing victimization of children in vulnerable situations. Together we were able to make a solid impact on Kaiser Medical Services, through the Dr. Hurst case, with John Bradley of your office. I would like to review this case, to examine and discuss what is the best direction to pursue to insure the Catholic Archdiocese understands, and accepts responsibility for reporting child abuse and neglect, when it comes to their attention.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,



BART WILSON, BRANCH MANAGER  
CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES

BW:dh

cc: Detective Gary Sussman  
Mr. Riley Atkins

PD 0082

RECEIVED  
SEP 15 1983  
M.J.B.&C.

July 10, 1983

The Most Reverend Cornelius M. Power  
Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon  
2816 East Burnside Street  
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Archbishop Power:

You will understand if I reserve "Your Grace" and "Your Excellency" for the good ones like Archbishop Howard and Archbishop Dwyer.

Today I attended Mass at All Saints Parish, expecting you to explain the situation about Laughlin (sorry, but he doesn't merit the appellation of "Father"). I was disappointed but not surprised that you found something more important to do today.

I've known Bishop Waldschmidt for some time and was very surprised that he could read your letter with a straight face. Your implication that you moved on the matter immediately when it came to your attention, asking the priest to resign and then canceling his appointment to St. Thomas Moore Parish, was an outright lie, and you know it.

*Johnson  
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Oregon  
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me to  
him what*  
May I refresh your memory that I wrote you on April 1, 1975, about my concerns of support of homosexuality coming from a staff member at Central Catholic High School. Receiving no reply, a meeting was arranged for us to meet in your office on May 30, 1975. At that time you seemed to tolerate, if not condone, homosexuality being offered as an alternative life style. I also recall telling you that Laughlin had asked my son, both at a one-on-one meeting in his office at All Saints prior to my son's Confirmation and in the Confessional, "What are your sexual fantasies?" That, to me, might suggest recruitment, but you probably know more about that than I do. It should have been a notice to you that the man had a problem, and as Archbishop it was your duty to get to the bottom of it, which might have spared Laughlin going through what he is going through now (though I suspect that is not too much, thanks to you and other supporters) and saved any number of innocent victims. It is my belief that only some of the cases have come to light.

I was present at an Archdiocesan School Board Meeting when, during a break someone mentioned to the Board President something about the "Dignity" group. The remark reached the ears of Laughlin who was seated way across the room and apparently touched a nerve. He ordered the individuals out of the room or building and I was aware at the time that a complaint was filed with you the next day.

*Not a  
OK  
10-9-83*

The Most Reverend Cornelius M. Power  
July 10, 1983  
Page 2.

*Names, dates??*

Need I refresh your memory that your office and you individually have received complaints about Laughlin from both priests and the laity and apparently you have done nothing?

In my opinion, you are as responsible as Laughlin for the acts and crimes committed, as you had knowledge of the problem and you refused to act. While I believe his is not an isolated case in the Archdiocese, it is the one before us now.

It is my considered opinion that you should remove yourself from the office of Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon. Failing that, I would support a movement to have you removed.

The statement in your letter of today that at his Ordination a priest commits to live the Gospel and set an example is quite contrary to your defense of those who support homosexuality. Think about it.

As you may have gathered by now, I do not respect you as a man, and it is hard for me to respect your office of Archbishop when it has been so abused by you.

I recall that when the Chapel and campus of Marylhurst were desecrated by cries for support of abortion and lesbianism that you refused to take any action, presumably more concerned about the protection of your sister than the defence of your Faith.

I was the recipient of profanities by Laughlin when inquiry was made regarding the handling of parish funds. There seems to be a reason to inquire now regarding the bingo funds, the funds solicited for the construction of a gymnasium, etc. Perhaps you were not aware that he had solicited funds for the construction of a church in Poland. It is not too late to inquire. Do it!

What you do now will determine how worthy you are to hold the office of Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon.

Sincerely,

WCM:ht

*St. Vincent de Paul*

1025 COLUMBIA N.E.  
SALEM, OREGON, 97303

Most Reverend Cornelius M. Power, D.D., J.C.D.  
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon  
The Chancery Office  
2838 East Burnside Street  
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Archbishop Power:

I have agonized at how to go about writing this letter to you regarding the sexual abuse charges brought against Father Thomas B. Laughlin. I guess you might call this an "I told you so" letter.

I was Associate Pastor at All Saints Parish from 1973 to 1979, Father Laughlin was the Pastor. During my last three years at All Saints, several parents approached me concerning the problem of sexual difficulties between Father Laughlin and the altar boys. My suggestion to these parents was they needed to confront Father Laughlin. Some may have, I am not sure. Some came to see you personally, but nothing was done.

Also, after being approached by the parents I became more aware of Father Laughlin calling seventh and eighth grade boys up to his room for an hour or more and the door to his living quarters being locked.

Thirdly, and this is what has really made me angry, when I was to be sent to St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Salem, Bishops Waldschmidt and Steiner met with me in July 1979 at the Chancery office. You at the time were on vacation. At this meeting I told both Bishop Waldschmidt and Bishop Steiner (they were together with me) of the concern of parents concerning sexual contact or sexual overtures to the seventh and eighth grade altar boys, and what I had observed. At that time I told them, "I am telling you this so that something can be done. If you choose to ignore it and something of great scandal happens, then it will be on your heads! But something must be done now, and the sooner the better." Whether you were informed about this conversation I do not know. I was left with the impression that you would be.

I am also angry at the fact that if you and the other bishops were aware of the problem and ignored it, hoping it would go away, then an injustice has been done to the people of All Saints Parish, an injustice to Father Laughlin and an injustice to all the priests of this Archdiocese. This sexual matter existed before 1980, and I am afraid you will see it all surface, especially now that the matter has become public.

Father Laughlin could have been helped but it appears that the situation was overlooked. Parents, who have approached me personally came to you with concern for their sons, their parish and the Church, and it appears that their concerns were ignored. And now that this whole situation has become public every priest in this Archdiocese will be suspect. A few of my own parish members have made such intimations - and this I resent.

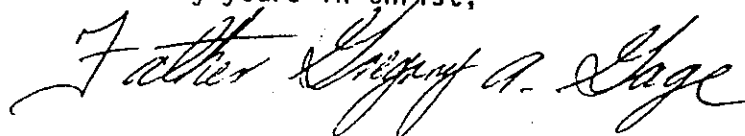
I have nothing but compassion for Father Laughlin, he has many good qualities, I only hope it is not too late to help him.

I feel a great ache for the people of All Saints Parish whom I love and served, and who have suffered greatly over the incident and now they must face this hurt and scandal. They are going to need a lot of understanding, compassion and healing - I hope they receive it.

And as for you Archbishop, I also feel compassion, because I am afraid you are going to suffer a great deal over this situation.

I am angry, resentful and hurt at the way this whole situation has been handled. To err is human and to forgive divine, but even after forgiveness the scars remain. My prayers for you and all involved, but "I told you so."

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Father Gregory A. Gage  
Pastor

GG:enc

30 June 1983

cc: Bishop Waldschmidt  
✓ Bishop Steiner  
Father Joseph Woods, OSB

# ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

THE CHANCERY OFFICE

2838 E. BURNSIDE - P. O. BOX 351

PORTLAND, OREGON 97207

OFFICE OF THE  
AUXILIARY BISHOP

CONFIDENTIAL

September 3, 1983

Mr. Owen Alstott  
Publisher, Oregon Catholic Press  
P.O. Box 14809  
Portland, Or. 97214

Dear Owen,

Regarding our lengthy conversation on Friday, September 2, I am putting into writing my thoughts and feelings expressed to you then. I thank you for your candor and understanding and I appreciate the delicate position you are in as the new publisher of the Oregon Catholic Press. I feel much less angry than I was initially. Nevertheless, as I indicated to you, I must go on record as strongly objecting to the Catholic Sentinel's treatment of the news regarding Father Thomas Laughlin in all four articles, but I will limit my criticism to that of the current issue of Sept. 2.

First, in your letter to me, dated Sept. 1, 1983, you stated "by way of information, two county prosecutors called the Sentinel Thursday to express their satisfaction, ..." and you identified the two as John Colby, prosecutor, and John Gardiner, a Deputy District Attorney. I was mystified that these two gentlemen, if they are subscribers, would receive their copies on Wednesday. I myself, though not on the mailing list of our Catholic Sentinel, must wait until copies are available at the Chancery Office receptionist's desk. If you remember our two meetings on Tuesday, the defense attorneys and I, myself, had asked to see a copy in advance and were denied. I cannot understand why the prosecuting attorneys were given privileged consideration.

Secondly, you will recall that I met with you twice, once with the Chancellor of the Archdiocese, Fr. Gregory Moys, and once with Fr. Griffin, Canon Lawyer for the Archdiocese. Mr. Pfohman was present at the second meeting. I felt good about the meetings and our mutual expression of concerns. When I read the September 2 issue of the Sentinel, I felt betrayed and angry.

I felt that the almost full page coverage sensationalized a very sensitive issue, was totally irresponsible and had no redeeming journalistic value. I am aware of your concerns about a Catholic newspaper being censored by the "Church" in the name of freedom of the press, but this issue of the Sentinel only proves the value of such monitoring of what goes forth under the banner of "Catholic Sentinel".

At this time, I cannot say that I am proud of the newspaper that is meant to serve the needs of Roman Catholics and our brothers and sisters of other Churches and Synagogues. It is sad to have to say that I was much more impressed with the spirit of objectivity, sensitivity, fairness and moderation, and yes, Christian justice and charity, exhibited by the radio, television, and secular press, as well as that of our courts of justice.

The Oregonian's article of Wed., Aug. 31, did reflect a concern for a person with a sickness, even quoting the mother of one of the victims, calling for "compassion and mercy". That is the type of response I would have hoped for in the Catholic press. You quoted my statement asking for prayers, love, compassion and forgiveness and I had hoped that those qualities would reflect our reporting of this event.

PD 0087

# ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

THE CHANCERY OFFICE  
2838 E. BURNSIDE - P. O. BOX 351  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97207

OFFICE OF THE  
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Page 2

Perhaps I am disturbed because I was present for the hour and a half sentencing of Fr. Laughlin and took copious notes and I received a much different impression than your reporter. Although I was called upon for a statement and Fr. Griffin reported what the Archdiocese is doing, the testimony basically centered on only two witnesses, Dr. Jay Feierman, a psychiatrist, and Dr. Richard Lezere, a clinical psychologist. They quoted the American Association of Psychiatrists as defining pedophilia as an illness that is treatable. The courts and the secular media treated Fr. Laughlin as a human being in need of treatment and compassion.

Now to get to specifics about the article. The attorney for the Archdiocese, Mr. Robert McMenamin, is extremely upset about damaging and prejudicial statements that may end up costing the Archdiocese large sums of money. The statement in question is sandwiched in between two quotes of mine to imply that I made the statement:

".....Bishop Steiner said.

The Archdiocese has offered to pay counselling costs for Fr. Laughlin's victims and is negotiating financial settlements with some of the families, Fr. Griffin said.

Bishop Steiner expressed the bishops' regret ..... " (Actually I expressed my own regret.)

The second specific is perhaps most damaging if not libelous. In the sixth paragraph of said article, your readers are led to believe that John Colby, the prosecuting attorney (and the one who read your copy), stated at the hearing that Fr. Laughlin "made the trip with an 18-year-old boy with whom he had cultivated a sexual relationship while the youth was under 18, said John Colby"...." Absolutely false. That statement may have come from a confidential police report or been made to the reporter privately, but any linkage of the youth to a sexual relationship on the trip or before the youth was 18 was certainly not stated in court. Please refer to the court proceedings. Fortunately the attorneys and judges and secular news media have the sensitivity and professional ethics not to ruin people's reputation.

I can only pray (and cry) and have the greatest sympathy for a young man, whose name is known publicly, must now have to live his life in shame and disgrace because of our reporting in the name of "Catholic" something not even made specific in the courts and certainly not revealed in the secular news media.

Let me insert here parenthetically that when I say "you" in this letter, I mean "we" or "us", as I consider myself a part of our Oregon Catholic Press and must share the responsibility at least in the minds of the people who think "Bishops" when they hear "Church" or such phrases as "Oregon Catholic Press".

The second specific item is the eighth paragraph which insinuates that I was present at the sentencing only because Archbishop Power and Bishop Waldschmidt were in Rome "to meet with Pope John Paul". Simply not true.

The next item is the reporting about Judge Riggs' statements. I admit that I was having difficulty hearing the Judge's soft-spoken and measured words, but I have difficulty believing that he said "Yet priests are human, and one should not expect too much from humans." If he said that, I guess it only proves that "to err is human..." If the statement was made, it was certainly out of context and did not represent his lengthy statement.

PD 0088



# ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

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Page 3

Towards the end of the article the Sentinel quoted a recommendation from the Personnel Board. Certainly you must know that Personnel Board meetings are closed and highly confidential. Never before has the Catholic Sentinel printed a recommendation of any Advisory Board, but especially of the Personnel Board, to the Archbishop, before it was approved or disapproved or even seen by him.

How many members of the Board were present? How many voted for and against? Was the Personnel "Policy and Procedure" followed or the Code of Canon Law, which is quite specific in terms of the Bishops response and possible penalties in such cases as this? Was this a "special meeting" as implied in the article "the day after sentencing". Was this recommendation made public by the Secretary of the Personnel Board? Does the Sentinel ordinarily cover Personnel Board meetings or only special ones when the Archbishop is not present? I am not at liberty to divulge the facts of this meeting, the alleged "recommendation", or the hidden agenda of some individuals, but I do believe that the Personnel Board acted improperly in reporting this to you and the Sentinel must bear the responsibility in reporting it.

It seems ironic that a Personnel Board which has been involved in yearlong discussions on the placement of Pastors, of which Fr. Laughlin was one, would so quickly sit in judgment of one whom they had approved or recommended. Are they now trying to protect themselves? To me this incident appears to be "Monday (or Tuesday) morning quarterbacking" and the reporting of otherwise privileged information amounts to Star Chamber "journalism" and kangaroo court "reporting".

After reading the article on the backpage of the Sentinel, I looked inside to find something in a lighter vein and ran across the cartoon, which must be a new feature. I looked at it for a full five minutes attempting to see the humor or the appropriateness or any justification for a picture of a "priest", who obviously wears only a black collar and a towel, being raised to new heights by three "boy" angels. It is entirely too sophisticated for my sense of humor at this time.

Father Laughlin is a priest of our Archdiocese, who has accomplished a great deal of good in giving over 40 years of his 57 years to serve our Church. He shares our humanity as a person; he shares our Faith as a Christian; he shares in the same priesthood that you and I share - the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Now he is a totally broken and shattered man. I have spoken with him for several hours over the past few days in our different conversations. Other than asking that he not be quoted in the Catholic Sentinel, a message that I passed on to Mr. Pfohman, which was ignored, He had few requests. But I will not quote him for obvious reasons. I only wish that others could talk with him personally, especially those who make judgmental remarks. He is a person, a priest, one of the redeemed - and also a former staff member of the Catholic Sentinel, which is somehow overlooked by the press.

An individual priest's life has been effectively destroyed. Many others have suffered directly or indirectly - the victims, their families, each member of our Archdiocese and Church, and our community, and our priests. I suggest that we need no more coals to add fuel to the fire, but begin we must to heal and forgive and unite in Christ's love.

PD 0089

# ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

THE CHANCERY OFFICE  
2838 E. BURNSIDE · P. O. BOX 351  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97207

OFFICE OF THE  
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Page 4

I also suggest that we emphasize the positive that we as an Archdiocesan family are accomplishing - 430 priests, 900 Sisters, 300,000 lay Catholics. There were many positive aspects of the recent Clergy Convention that could have been reported. Beyond the sensational resolutions that were reported, there were many other positive ones. There were liturgies involving many priests and deacons. There were many unifying and healing aspects of this year's Clergy Convention. And most important of all - 110 of our priests were presented with framed certificates signed by the 3 Bishops in recognition and appreciation of 20 years of service or more up to 62 years of service to the Archdiocese. Our Silver and Golden Jubilarians received engraved plaques and our retired priests were honored. Our clergy alone represent well over 10,000 years of dedication and loving service to this Archdiocese. But nary a word about this in our Catholic press. But then "that's not what sells newspapers".

I suggest that we pay attention to the evaluation of the Sentinel and report to our readers the positive things priests and laity are doing day in and day out, with inadequate pay and inadequate recognition, to serve our people. Even though this letter is very critical of our news reporting, I am not unmindful of the tremendous amount of good that you (we) accomplish in preaching the Good News of our salvation, through the very important means of the Catholic press.

I must end this on a personal note, with which I began. Owen, I have the greatest personal respect and admiration for you. I would love to get together with you for golf one of these days as you suggested. And I know that you have spent sleepless nights over this issue. I have also and if I have sounded hypercritical, it might be that is now in the wee hours of the morning and this has been a long, long week with an unbelievable stream of events and problems. Let us put this story to bed and get some rest ourselves. Thank you for your understanding. My kindest personal regards.

In Christ's love,

Bishop Kenneth Steiner  
Auxiliary Bishop Of Portland

cc.: Fritz Meagher  
Robert Pfohman  
Tony Staley  
Archbishop C. M. Power  
Bishop Paul Waldschmidt

PD 0090

ARCHDIOCESE OF PORTLAND IN OREGON

2838 EAST BURNSIDE, P.O. BOX 351  
PORTLAND, OREGON 97207

OFFICE OF  
AUXILIARY BISHOP

CONFIDENTIAL

September 6, 1983

Mr. Owen Alstott  
Oregon Catholic Press  
P.O. Box 14809  
Portland, Oregon 97214

Dear Owen,

As you are well aware, Archbishop Power, the President of Oregon Catholic Press, and Bishop Waldschmidt, a member of the Editorial Board of the Catholic Sentinel, are both in Rome for their "Ad limina" visit.

In their absence I feel that it is my obligation to ask you to refrain from publishing any more articles concerning Father Laughlin at this time. The Catholic Sentinel has already covered the story extensively in its last issue, and in three previous issues. The phrase that I hear again and again from our Catholic laity and priests is "Enough is enough."

Because silence on my part might be misconstrued, I go on record as vehemently protesting the Sentinel's printing of any more articles regarding Father Laughlin and any letters to the editor in this sensitive issue.

You have my other letter explaining my reasoning on this request. I have talked with many lay people and priests over this weekend and they in turn have discussed it with many more, and their concern seems to be one of shock and revulsion at the treatment in the Catholic Press of this matter. Some have said something to the effect that what "family," having the illness or moral problem of one of its members, would continue to bring it to the public's attention in such great detail. We are family.

In all of this the ones that suffer the most are the victims and their families, as well as the people of this Archdiocesan family, and in a special way the priests. Any prolonged coverage only causes us all to suffer when we are called upon not to judge and condemn and punish, but to love and forgive and heal.

Thank you once again. I would be happy to discuss this with you at any time. I do not think I need to ask that this and my previous letter written in confidence not be made public in any way.

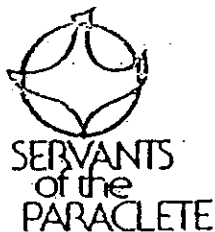
Faternally in Christ,

*+ Kenneth D. Steiner*

+Kenneth D. Steiner  
Auxiliary Bishop of Portland

Copies to: Archbishop Power  
Bishop Waldschmidt

PD 0091



Jemez Springs, New Mexico 87025 (505) 829-3586

June 13, 1985

Judge William Riggs  
Multnomah City Court House  
1024 Southwest Fourth  
Portland, Oregon 97204

Your Honor:

Mr. Robert McMenamin called yesterday to inform us that a priest from the Archdiocese of Portland had contacted the probation department in Portland alleging that Fr. Tom Laughlin had communication with a [redacted], thus possibly violating one of the conditions of his probation. Upon confronting Fr. Laughlin with this information the following facts have emerged.

Fr. Laughlin did in fact have telephone and written communication with [redacted]. He also has sent him different gifts. By mutual consent both planned and agreed to spend a day or two together in San Diego, which they did around the 16th or 17th of March. The reason that we gave him permission to travel at that time was because he was taking an automobile and personal effects to a priest who had been a member of the module and who resides in Phoenix. It was agreed upon that he would drive the car to Phoenix and then return by plane to Albuquerque. It seems that Fr. Laughlin continued via airplane to San Diego then returned via airplane to Albuquerque. As a result of this incident, we have restricted him to the grounds of Foundation House and have forbidden him to function as a priest. We at this time respectfully request that you disregard our plan and recommendation we submitted in the report dated May 23, 1985. At that time, because of his progress in the program, we felt that Fr. Tom would be ready for limited ministry as a next step in his treatment. Because of the incident that has come to light we now strongly feel that Fr. Tom should no longer be permitted to function as a priest in the United States and that we should begin to relate to him in terms of treatment as a layman. Archbishop Power has revoked all of Fr. Laughlin's faculties as a priest. We suggest that we continue Fr. Laughlin's treatment, noting at this time that we would begin processing Fr. Laughlin in order to prepare him to function in the lay state.

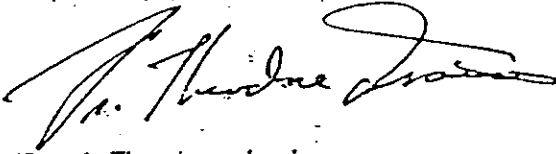
There have been no incidents of pedophilia up to this time and we would like to remind the court of our comments of the report of May 23 indicating an acceptance on his part of his homosexual orientation and a shift in attraction to older males. Our thrust would be to work with Fr. Tom to accept his reduction to the lay state and to understand and effectively deal with his homosexuality.



REDACTED

If we can be of any assistance to the court in this matter, we are more than willing to cooperate.

Respectfully Yours,



(Rev.) Theodore Isalas

TI:ss

cc: Robert W. McMenamin  
Morgan Park Building  
729 Southwest Alder Street  
Portland, Oregon 97205

Most Reverend Cornelius Power  
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon  
The Chancery Office  
2838 East Burnside  
P.O. Box 351  
Portland, Oregon 97207

Mr. Michael Schrunk  
District Attorney  
Multnomah County Courthouse  
Room 500  
Portland, Oregon 97204

VOTUM OF ARCHBISHOP LEVADA

July 8, 1988

His Eminence  
Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger  
Prefect, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith  
00120 Vatican City  
Europe

Your Eminence:

It is my sad duty to forward the petition of the Rev. Thomas B. Laughlin, a priest of this Archdiocese, for a return to the lay state, in accord with the provisions of Canon 290, n. 3. I have consulted extensively with my predecessor, Archbishop Power, my two auxiliary bishops, Bishops Waldschmidt and Steiner, and the members of the Clergy Personnel Board, and it is their unanimous recommendation that Fr. Laughlin be returned to the lay state, since it would be impossible for him to continue to function as a priest, either here or elsewhere.

The Rev. Thomas B. Laughlin was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Portland on June 4, 1948. At the time he was not quite 23 years old. In his letter to me of May 30, 1988, he requests a return to the lay state, when he writes: "I hereby petition the Holy See for laicization, in accordance with your wishes."

As noted in the chronology included with these acts, he began homosexual pedophile contacts with boys shortly after ordination (about age of 25), and admitted to such misconduct both during his first priestly assignment as a teacher at Central Catholic High School, and as pastor of St. Mary Parish in Corvallis. These contacts continued and apparently increased in frequency and number during his tenure as pastor of All Saints Parish, Portland, until the time criminal charges of sexual abuse of minors were brought against him in 1983.

The reliable testimony of several boys questioned suggests that Fr. Laughlin used the confessional for purposes of solicitation.

Even after his conviction, sentence, and having served six months in prison, he abused the privileges of his court-ordered parole under the aegis of the Servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico by arranging for a secret liaison with one

of the young men he had molested, and paid for his journey to meet him in San Diego for the purposes of engaging in sexual conduct (cf. the June 13, 1985, letter of the Rev. Ted Isaias of the Servants of the Paraclete to Judge William Riggs). This conduct, notwithstanding the trauma of imprisonment and financial loss because of previous conduct, indicates a distinct probability for recidivist behavior. It seems necessary, therefore, that Fr. Laughlin be separated from the priesthood.

In the same letter, Fr. Isaias recommends that Fr. Laughlin be returned to the lay state.

In his memorandum of May 21, 1987, to me, Archbishop Cornelius Power (former Archbishop of Portland) recommends that Fr. Laughlin be laicized. The March 3, 1986, memorandum of Archbishop Power indicates the negative judgment of the Superior of the Servants of the Paraclete, Fr. Michael Foley, about Fr. Laughlin's response to the treatment at the program in New Mexico. This negative judgment is reconfirmed in the August 21, 1987, memorandum of Fr. Paul Peri, Clergy Personnel Director of the Archdiocese, reporting his personal visit with Fr. Foley in New Mexico.

While Fr. Laughlin initially asked that I not ask him to petition for laicization for the sake of his peace of mind, he has consistently indicated in my correspondence with him that he would make such a petition if it should be my pastoral judgment that it were necessary.

In my judgment, a return to the lay state is indicated for Fr. Laughlin for the following reasons:

- 1) He has since the beginning of his priesthood been unfaithful to his priestly promise of celibacy;
- 2) He has engaged in criminal conduct by sexually abusing minor boys;
- 3) He has been criminally convicted of the above-mentioned crime, with resultant enormous scandal to the faithful of the Archdiocese, and with resultant enormous financial damage to the welfare of the local Church;
- 4) He has abused the privileged forum of the Sacrament of Penance for purposes of solicitation.
- 5) In the judgment of those supervising his therapy, he remains confused and untrustworthy. Were he to continue as a priest, even with the suspension of his faculties to function as a priest, he might find some encouragement to use his status as an occasion for further misconduct. Should this occur, damage to the reputation of the Church here, and potential financial liability, would be incalculable.

The financial cost to the Archdiocese has been staggering. Over \$1,000,000 in settlement of damages to some of the young men he molested, in criminal court costs and penalties, and in legal fees has already been paid.

Perhaps more damaging yet has been the public notoriety which has accompanied this case. It has occasioned severe, public attacks on my predecessor, Archbishop Cornelius Power, for lack of timely intervention regarding Fr. Laughlin, and has had a serious demoralizing impact upon the priests and the most committed laity of the Archdiocese.

My advisors and I considered instructing a canonical process to return Fr. Laughlin to the lay state, in accord with the provisions of Canon 290, n. 2. I believe, however, that recommending his petition for laicization to you is the wiser course.

Sensitivities about this case remain extremely high here in the Archdiocese of Portland. It would be difficult to ensure to Fr. Laughlin that his case would be treated with objectivity if the matter were handled by our tribunal; and it would be time-consuming and additionally expensive - not to mention giving unfortunate additional exposure to the details of the case - if I were to have to ask another ecclesiastical court to conduct the trial. I believe that a canonical process could risk causing further scandal in this unfortunate case.

Another factor which persuades me not to use the canonical procedure is the judgment expressed by several American canonists (incorrectly, in my view) that because pedophilia is classified as a psychopathy or illness, a canonical procedure should see this as a mitigating circumstance and not result in the maximum penalty, i.e., return to the lay state.

There is further the possibility that the priest, if unwilling to accept the sentence, would engage in appeals to delay and frustrate the decision. Such delay in the case of Fr. Laughlin would be most unwise; his court-ordered parole ends July 29, 1988. It seems imperative to me that I ensure, both for this Archdiocese and any other jurisdiction, that no further liability for any future actions by Fr. Laughlin be assumed, and that it be clear to him and to any enquirer that the Church does not condone his criminal, immoral behavior.

Two recent cases of priest pedophilia have come to public notice in the neighboring Archdiocese of Seattle. As they receive the attention of the media, it will be very helpful to the reputation of the Church before the general public, in an area where Catholics make up only 12% of the population, to be able to give assurances that Fr. Laughlin is no longer able to function as a priest.

Because of the special circumstances of this case, I ask you to accept the petition of Fr. Laughlin contained in his letter of May 30 to me. I believe it would serve no useful purpose to recall Fr. Laughlin to develop in further detail his reasons for petitioning laicization. There have been threats against his life on the part of parents of boys he has abused should he return to Portland. Since the reasons for his return to the lay state are a matter of public record, and since he has voluntarily petitioned this favor in recognition of the scandal caused to the Church, I ask that the case be accepted without further interrogation of the petitioner.



In forwarding this petition, I respectfully ask for prompt consideration by the Congregation of this request in view of the July 29, 1988, expiration date of his court-ordered parole. I earnestly ask that the Congregation forward Fr. Laughlin's petition for laicization to the Holy Father with its favorable recommendation.

With personal best wishes for Your Eminence, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend William J. Levada  
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon

Thomas Bernard Laughlin

CHRONOLOGY

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- II. Evaluations from School
- III. Facts Pertaining to the Present Process
  - A. Resignation and Arrest
  - B. Brief Description of Offenses
  - C. Aftermath: Sentence, Incarceration, Treatment
- IV. Laughlin's Statements During the Police Investigation
- V. Summary of Thomas Laughlin's Psychological Evaluation (Pre-Sentence)
- VI. Sentence, Incarceration, Treatment
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Thomas Bernard Laughlin

I. Biographical Data

- A. Born Thomas Bernard Laughlin, on July 26, 1925; son of David and Marie (Killila).
- B. Laughlin attended Creighton Prep, Omaha, Nebraska (1938-42), and Loras College (1942-45). He was an above average student.
- C. His theology studies were taken at St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, where he received an STL (1945-48).
- D. Laughlin was ordained a subdeacon on March 12, 1948, a deacon on March 13, 1948, and a priest on June 4, 1948. He was ordained by Bishop Louis Kucera of Lincoln, Nebraska, for the Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon. There is no reason listed for his move from the midwest to Portland.
- E. Laughlin's assignments in Portland were the following:
  - 1. Central Catholic High School - 1948-1965
  - 2. Pastor, St. Frederic, St. Helens - 1965-1966
  - 3. Pastor, St. Mary, Corvallis - 1966-1972
  - 4. Pastor, All Saints, Portland - 1972-1983

II. School Evaluations

Only two school evaluations were found in Laughlin's file. They are, in full:

- A. Report on Thomas Laughlin, senior year, Loras College, dated February 1, 1945:

"Mr. Laughlin is boyish, lacks responsibility, irregular at times and needs constant checking. He is not very reliable, but is cooperative, moderately industrious, likeable disposition and a very agreeable manner. He has above average scholastic ability and his work in Latin is very satisfactory."

Vote of Board: Yes - 8, No - 0

- B. Report from St. Mary's Seminary, dated May 15, 1946:

"Mr. Laughlin is a wholesome character, regular and pious. There is some immaturity about him too but he is developing very well as time goes on. He has good intellectual ability and has obtained good results in his studies."

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### III. Facts Pertaining to the Present Process

#### A. Resignation of Pastoral Assignment

1. On June 15, 1983, Fr. Thomas Laughlin submitted his resignation as pastor of All Saints Church to Archbishop Cornelius Power. This resignation was accepted the same day.
2. Laughlin also requested and was granted an "indefinite leave of absence" because of "extreme nervous exhaustion and pressures."
3. On June 23, 1983, the Multnomah County District Attorney charged Thomas Laughlin with two counts of Sexual Abuse II. Laughlin appeared in Multnomah County Circuit Court that same day and pled guilty to the DA's information charging him with both counts.
4. Laughlin's guilty plea was entered with the understanding that the DA would recommend five years of state probation with conditions including mandatory sex offender treatment, no contact with children under age 18, and payment for any and all counseling costs of all victims.
5. Sentencing was scheduled for August 30, 1983.

#### B. Brief Description of Offenses

1. On May 27, 1983, Portland Police were contacted by \_\_\_\_\_ age 17, who reported that he had been sexually abused by Laughlin. He indicated that he was involved in repeated acts of oral sodomy, anal sodomy, and mutual masturbation with Laughlin over a two year period. At the time of the abuse, \_\_\_\_\_ had been between the ages of 12 and 14. \_\_\_\_\_ had been a student at All Saints School and an altar boy. Virtually all of the sexual acts occurred in the rectory; specifically, in Laughlin's bedroom.

These events took place from the fall of 1978 to summer of 1980.

2. In the process of the investigation, other names began to surface. A number of young men were interviewed, all altar boys, all students at All Saints. Though not all had been molested by Laughlin, a number of them mentioned being quizzed in the confessional about their sexual fantasies and their masturbatory practices.
3. On June 8, 1983, the family of \_\_\_\_\_ was contacted by police. \_\_\_\_\_ had been a student at All Saints and an altar boy. When \_\_\_\_\_ was in 8th grade, Laughlin began to inquire of \_\_\_\_\_ sexual fantasies and whether he

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masturbated. This relationship between Laughlin and escalated into visits in Laughlin's bedroom. During one of those visits, Laughlin fondled penis. This action caused a great deal of distress to the victim.

eventually informed his parents of Laughlin's actions.

4. Police then contacted another victim, He, like the others, had been a student at All Saints School and an altar boy. said he had been molested on two separate occasions. The first involved Laughlin fondling his penis. The second took place in Laughlin's car. was sitting next to Laughlin, and Laughlin reached over and stroked his genital area.

told his parents of these incidents, and they, in turn, informed Archbishop Power in March of 1981.

5. Laughlin himself presented the name of older brother, denied involvement with Laughlin when questioned by his parents; but when police questioned him, he admitted that Laughlin had quizzed him about his masturbatory practices and fantasies. involvement with Laughlin took place when was in 8th grade at All Saints School (1978-79).
6. Similar incidents in Laughlin's bedroom were reported by a former altar boy and student at All Saints, was invited into Laughlin's bedroom, questioned concerning masturbatory habits, and fondled. The last contact between Laughlin and was in May, 1983.
7. When Laughlin gave his own testimony related to these events, the name of surfaced. Laughlin's involvement with was contemporaneous with that of The relationship between and lasted about two years, beginning when was a 7th grade student at All Saints. Prior to any sexual contact, Laughlin quizzed about masturbation, even recommending it as a way to "let off steam."

The first sexual contact took place in church, just before Mass. This was during the winter of 1979. Laughlin placed his hand in pocket and stroked his penis. In May-June of 1979, was summoned to Laughlin's bedroom. Laughlin told him to drop his pants, then he fondled penis. This continued over the next year, once or twice a month. Laughlin made promise not to tell anyone of their involvement.

The last incident took place when was in 9th grade (September, 1980). Laughlin had take off his trousers and masturbated him.

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[When Laughlin was charged with two counts of Sexual Abuse II by the District Attorney, the victims names were

8. During the investigation after the charges were made, another name surfaced: \_\_\_\_\_ Police contacted \_\_\_\_\_ on August 5, 1983. \_\_\_\_\_ was 18 when interviewed. He denied ever having been sexually abused or molested by Laughlin; but he admitted that, on numerous occasions, Laughlin had made sexual advances toward him.

\_\_\_\_\_ had been a student at All Saints and had been an altar boy. He had recently graduated from Central Catholic High School.

There was little contact after \_\_\_\_\_ quit being an altar boy (during 8th grade, because of Laughlin's advances) until \_\_\_\_\_ was a junior in high school. At that time, \_\_\_\_\_ was given a part time job by Laughlin at All Saints.

\_\_\_\_\_ admitted to an alcohol problem in high school and said that Laughlin provided him and his friends with alcohol on several occasions. During this time, \_\_\_\_\_ admits that Laughlin had attempted to fondle him but that the two of them remained friends.

It was \_\_\_\_\_ who accompanied Laughlin to the Servants of the Paraclete treatment center in New Mexico. Alcohol was provided to \_\_\_\_\_ on a daily basis.

#### IV. Laughlin's Statements During the Police Investigation.

- A. Laughlin confirms involvement with at least 6 youths. There was no involvement with anyone from 1980 until 1983 when the situation with \_\_\_\_\_ occurred (May, 1983).
- B. Laughlin confirms that he has felt homosexual tendencies for some time, but he refers to himself as a bisexual.
- C. Since the age of 25, Laughlin states that he has been involved in homosexual and heterosexual experiences on 12 occasions.
- D. He recalls being involved in "an incident similar to that in the present crime having occurred about 20 years ago when he was teaching at Central Catholic High School." He was transferred from there after conferring with a superior regarding that incident.
- E. He also recalls two such incidences having occurred at Corvallis about 15 years ago.

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- F. He claims to have sexual thoughts of men and women, not of youth. The incidences of youth were because of their easy availability.
- G. He admits that he has used and abused the "tremendous respect for priests."

V. Summary of Thomas Laughlin's Psychological Evaluation (F. Robert Stuckey, Ph.D)

- A. Laughlin reported "continuous 'temptations' throughout his life to engage in sexual activities, and while he has resisted heterosexual relationships, he did report having homosexual activities relatively infrequently but first occurring when he was in his twenties."
- B. Though Laughlin is accused of having a "prurient interest while relating to children in the confessional," he denies he abused his role as confessor. He admits asking children about their sexual and masturbatory activities, but he believed "he was behaving appropriately and with good moral intentions."
- C. Laughlin is an individual "who is moderately defensive but who tends to rely upon denial and repression in order to control his feelings and impulses . . . There appears to be much immaturity and much passivity and dependency . . . While he overtly submits to the control and regulations of external authorities, there is much underlying pressure to rebel against such control.
- D. Laughlin "overtly expressed the fact that he has had many temptations by women, but he has resisted their seductions." However, "his underlying feeling of sexual inadequacy is more reflective of fear of women and much homoerotic tendency."
- E. Laughlin has "very 'childlike' needs for approval, love, and acceptance. He seems to have more difficulties relating to authority figures and therefore seems to feel more comfortable or relaxed perhaps with younger individuals."
- F. Stuckey concludes: "Diagnostically, (Laughlin) did present the profile of a basically passive-dependent personality with pedophilic tendencies."

VI. Sentence, Incarceration, and Treatment

On Monday, August 29, 1983, Thomas Laughlin was sentenced to one year in a Multnomah County Jail after pleading guilty to two misdemeanor charges of sexual abuse involving boys under the age of 18. Judge R. William Riggs ordered Laughlin to serve this time in a medium-security facility at Troutdale, Oregon.

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The District Attorney called for such a sentence, saying that he "no longer felt bound on the plea negotiations." Originally, the DA had called for probation and psychological counseling in exchange for a guilty plea. Such a plea was made; but because, in the DA's words, Laughlin "did not take the charges seriously," a jail sentence was recommended. Judge Riggs agreed with the recommendation.

The change in position by the DA's office resulted from a trip Laughlin made to New Mexico. After his guilty plea, Laughlin was free on his own recognizance until sentencing. During this period, Laughlin received permission from the court to drive to New Mexico to begin psychological treatment. He made the trip with an 18 year old boy with whom he had cultivated a sexual relationship

Laughlin was also put on a five year probationary period after the completion of his jail sentence. Judge Riggs set special conditions for this probation:

- Complete the treatment at Foundation House, Jemez Springs, New Mexico.

- Have no contact with the victims or their families unless approved by representatives of the State Child Protective Services or his probation officer.

- Have no contact with children under 18 and fully disclose to his employer or any future employer his involvement in this crime.

- Undergo thorough alcohol evaluation and participate in any recommended therapeutic program.

- Not leave Oregon without written permission of probation officer or transfer probation out of state unless another state takes charge of probation supervision.

- Undergo and pay for periodic polygraph examinations at the direction of a probation officer to determine if he has been involved in similar criminal activity.

- Pay all costs of counseling or treatment required by all victims in this case.

- Not alter residence, employment, treatment and/or school program without written approval of probation officer or court.

- Pay a \$25.00 monthly probation fee.

Laughlin began serving his sentence on September 7, 1983. He would have to serve at least 5 months and 21 days before being eligible for parole. In February of 1984, Laughlin entered the treatment program at Jemez Springs.

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VII. Postscript

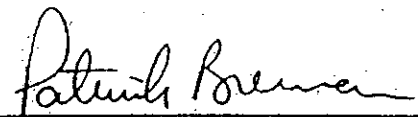
After Laughlin had been in the treatment program at Jemez Springs for over a year, he arranged to meet one of the victims, in San Diego. Laughlin had received permission to travel to Phoenix in order to transport the personal effects of a former resident of Foundation House. Laughlin, however, continued on by plane to San Diego and met . . . While in San Diego, Laughlin and engaged in sexual activity.

VIII. Financial Cost to the Archdiocese

A. Settlements

B. Other Costs

- 1. Legal Expenses \$ 51,756
- 2. Foundation House \$ 39,496
- 3. Other \$ 4,099



Rev. Patrick Brennan, Judicial Vicar  
Instructor

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