

THE SAGA OF ROBERT TRUPIA

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Robert Trupia was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Tucson, Arizona in 1973. He was involuntarily laicized by Pope John Paul II in August, 2004. In between those dates he sexually abused dozens of minor boys. He was first reported to Diocesan authorities in 1974. In 1975 one of his victims was questioned by the late Bishop Green who assured him that he would take care of the matter. Nothing happened. In 1976 Bishop Green transferred Trupia from the parish in Yuma to Tucson where he was in residence at Mother of Sorrows Parish and Vice-officialis or associate judicial vicar of the diocese. Bishop Green had suggested some form of treatment after his conversation with the victim in 1975 but Trupia never complied and the bishop never forced the issue. Trupia continued to sexually abuse boys and that year (1976) he was given another important position in the diocese, that of vice-chancellor. In 1977 Bishop Green promoted Trupia, a man who had been reported to him more than once for sexual abuse of minors, to the post of Judicial Vicar of the diocese. Church law requires that the candidates for any of these ecclesiastical offices be of impeccable moral character. (pp. 2-3)

In 1977 Bishop Green sponsored Trupia for membership in the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre which is a distinct honor. In 1979 Bishop Green had Trupia named a Papal Chamberlain to the pope with the title of Monsignor. Between 1976, when Trupia moved to Tucson, and 1982 when Bishop Green retired, Trupia had been reported several times to pastors or to diocesan officials. Nothing ever happened except for the series of promotions.

After Bishop Moreno was appointed but before he was installed he was informed by the rector of St. John's Seminary in Camarillo CA that Trupia had been caught in bed with a boy by a housekeeper. Bishop Moreno apparently did nothing. In 1988 Trupia was declared "*persona non grata*" by the seminary officials and was told not to return by the rector.

In 1989 Fr. Allt, the chancellor, reported to Bishop Moreno that he had been informed that Trupia was living with an 18 year old boy. Trupia denied any untoward behavior and the diocese dropped the issue. (p. 1)

In June 1989 a police detective spoke to the diocesan lawyer, Thomas Murphy, about concerns that Trupia had sexually molested minor boys. The detective and the chancellor discussed the reports with Bishop Moreno who did nothing. In September 1989 the diocese allowed Trupia to go to Catholic University of America to pursue a doctorate in Canon Law. The diocese paid all expenses.

In February 1992 a mother wrote to Archbishop Sanchez of Santa Fe that Trupia had sexually molested her son when he was ten years old (p. 4). This time Bishop Moreno moved on the report and referred it to the diocesan 'Sensitive Claims Committee.' On April 1, 1992,

Bishop Moreno and Chancellor Allt confronted Trupia who admitted the accusations but expressed relief at learning the source of the allegations and then said that the reports could have been worse. He admitted other instances of sexual abuse and asked to be allowed to retire. The bishop did not acquiesce to this request and instead put Trupia on administrative leave while further investigation was carried out. The administrative leave included a prohibition from public ministry. (pp. 13-16)

This was the point at which Trupia began the long, convoluted canonical odyssey using the appeals process provided in the Code of Canon Law as well as the special procedures followed by the Vatican congregations. In the course of this process Trupia would act as his own counsel for the most part although he was represented by an advocate accredited to practice before the Vatican tribunals for part the trip through the legal maze. As Trupia lodged appeal after appeal his case came to the attention of officials in several of the Vatican departments: the Congregation for the Clergy, the Congregation for Bishops, the Apostolic Signatura and finally, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. The twists and turns through the canonical process have included some unusual elements including documented attempts by Trupia to blackmail Bishop Moreno. There is also documented evidence that the prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy tried to convince the bishop to set aside all of the credible evidence of a career in the priesthood marked by constant sexual abuse of minors in favor of paid retirement with credentials that he, Trupia, was a priest in good standing.

Bishop Moreno ignored the required canonical procedures from the time he first learned about Trupia as a serial predator, shortly after his appointment as bishop in 1982, until he was faced with a credible report that came to him via Archbishop Sanchez of Santa Fe, the metropolitan archbishop (p. 7). Bishop Kicanas was appointed coadjutor bishop on Oct. 30, 2001 and succeeded as bishop of the diocese on Mar. 7, 2003. Given the notoriety and complexity of the Trupia case there is little doubt but that Bishop Kicanas became aware of it almost immediately.

Bishop Moreno finally took action in February, 1992 after he had received a report that Trupia had sexually abused a ten year old boy in 1981. From that point on both bishops made every effort to follow the prescribed canonical procedures. In spite of some minor procedural missteps along the way they took great pains to allow Trupia every element of due process and accorded him every consideration and protection of his right to defense. The numerous appeals sent to Vatican offices and letters to Bishop Moreno by Trupia reveal an uncanny ability to twist, misinterpret and misuse the law for self-serving purposes and all under the guise of following the rules. Finally in 2002 Bishop Moreno asked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to permit him to initiate the administrative process leading to the involuntary laicization or dismissal of Trupia. This process moved along at a comparatively slow rate until a reporter for the Arizona Star discovered Trupia living in Maryland in a condominium, driving a Mercedes-Benz and still associating with young boys (pp. 204-209). This information was presented to the CDF along with the stark reality of additional monetary losses. That may have been the necessary kick to jumpstart the process once again. Trupia's laicization was announced in August, 2004.

N.B. Page numbers appear in parentheses after some dates in the chronology. These correspond to the pagination I inserted in the documents I selected from the files. They are written in longhand at the bottom of each page.

The Chronology of Robert Trupia

- 1989 *Jan. 13:* Chancellor Allt sent a memo to the bishop about a report that Trupia was living with an 18 year old boy at the diocesan clergy residence. (p. 1)
- 1992 *Feb. 4:* Diane Fuller writes to Archbishop Sanchez that her son had been sexually abused by Trupia in 1981 when he was 10 years old. Shortly thereafter Archbishop Sanchez called Bishop Moreno about the accusation. (pp. 4-6)
- 1992 *Mar. 29:* Bishop Moreno wrote to the papal nuncio about Trupia and outlined his response. (pp. 8-10)
- 1992 *Mar. 30:* Bishop Moreno wrote to Trupia to inform him that he was placing him on administrative leave pending an investigation. (pp. 11-12)
- 1992 *Apr. 1:* Bishop Moreno and Fr. Allt met with Trupia and presented the allegations and Trupia admitted them. (pp. 13-17)
- 1992 *Apr. 6:* Trupia responded and challenged the suspension. (pp. 19-20)
- 1992 *Apr. 14:* The papal nuncio responded to Bishop Moreno. He told them a Vatican commission was studying the issue of statute of limitations in canonical trials. (p. 21)
- 1992 *May 24:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Moreno and repeated his offer to retire as a solution to the problem. He had made this offer verbally at the April 1 meeting and repeated in a letter of July 29. (pp. 22-23)
- 1992 *Aug. 25:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Moreno formally requesting that he revoke his suspension. In doing so Trupia took the first step in the canonical process known as “hierarchical recourse.” (pp. 24-25)
- 1992 *Sept. 1:* Bishop Moreno responded to Trupia and refused his request to revoke the administrative leave and repeated his demand that Trupia submit to psychological evaluation which Trupia consistently refused to do. Bishop Moreno had first suggested psychological testing and recommended St. Luke Institute in Suitland, Maryland at the meeting on April 1, 1992. (pp. 28-29)

- 1992 *Sept. 14:* Trupia appealed the bishop's refusal to the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome, Cardinal Jose Sanchez, Prefect. (Henceforth sometimes referred to as *Clero*.) Sanchez was succeeded by Dario Castrillon-Hoyos in June 1996. This was the first step in his lengthy involvement with the Vatican. (pp. 30-31)
- 1993 *Oct. 9:* The Congregation turned down his appeal stating that he was not actually suspended but on an administrative leave. (p. 38)
- 1993 *Oct. 23:* Trupia appealed the decision of the Congregation for the Clergy to the Apostolic Signatura, Cardinal Gilberto Agustoni, Prefect.
- 1994 *May 30:* Archbishop Grocholewski, Secretary of the Signatura, informed Bishop Moreno of the appeal and also informed him that *Clero* had retained its own advocate, Sig. Carlo Gullo, and Trupia had retained Sig. Carlo Tricerri as his advocate. (p. 39)
- 1994 *June 23:* Bishop Moreno wrote to the Signatura and informed them that Trupia had been accused of sexual misconduct and had been ordered to have a psychological assessment which he had refused. (p. 40)
- 1994 *Sept. 14:* Bishop Moreno issued a sworn affidavit in which he included, among other things, his recounting of Trupia's admission of the sexual abuse of the Fuller boy at the meeting of April 1, 1992. (pp. 47-51)
- 1994 *Oct. 3:* The Signatura issued its decision and accepted Trupia's petition for recourse stating that his appeal had basis in law. The decision said the recourse was based on errors in procedure and judgment made by Bishop Moreno whereby he had acted "unjustly" towards Trupia. In its final decree the Signatura suggested the contention might be resolved through an equitable solution, knowing that the basis of the issue was the pending charge of sexual abuse. (pp. 53-61 – the decision is announced on p. 61)
- 1995 *Mar. 20:* Cardinal Sanchez (*Clero*) wrote to Bishop Moreno and informed him that the case is now returned to Tucson where the bishop can proceed with either an administrative or judicial process in keeping with canons 1717ff or canons 1042-1044. (p. 73)
- 1995 *June 13:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Moreno in response to Moreno's letter demanding that he get a psychological assessment. He refused and offered his version of a compromise which in essence would mean retirement with full privileges as a priest. (pp.82-85)

- 1995 *July 25:* Trupia appealed the original Signatura decision to close the case and requested another hearing by the Signatura.
- 1995 *July 27:* Trupia wrote to Moreno and on the second page of his letter he mentions the threat he had made verbally to Moreno, i.e., that he would not want to be forced to disclose the fact that he and former Bishop Rausch of Phoenix had engaged in a sexual affair. (P. 91)
- 1995 *Sept. 22:* Bishop Moreno stated in a sworn affidavit to the Signatura that Trupia had admitted that he had been involved sexually with Bishop Rausch. (pp. 94-95)
- 1995 *Sept. 26:* The Signatura responded to Trupia's appeal and suggested that he drop all appeals and cooperate with Bishop Moreno. The letter is signed by the Prefect and the secretary which added to the force of the suggestion. (P. 96-97)
- 1995 *Oct. 29:* Trupia wrote to the Prefect of the Signatura and asked that their decision of July 5, 1995 be revoked. This was his third appeal to the Signatura of their own decisions.

At this point it is important to remember that all of Trupia's appeals are based on his objection to having been put on administrative leave by Bishop Moreno.

- 1996 *Mar. 29:* The Signatura rejected Trupia's appeal of their decision to terminate the case. (P. 126)
- 1996 *June 11:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Moreno and acknowledged that the Signatura had rejected his appeal and again offered to enter into a compromise with the bishop. (p. 131)
- 1996 *Oct. 21:* Trupia appealed to the Congregation for the Bishops claiming that in doing so he was making hierarchic recourse to the proper congregation since he alleged that Bishop Moreno was making illegal attempts to impose sanctions on him. He included a chronological summary for the Prefect, Cardinal Gantin, in which he excluded any mention of the accusation of sexual abuse of minors. He referred only to an unsubstantiated report of "wrong-doing." He sent a copy of the letter to Archbishop Castrillon-Hoyos who at that time was the new prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy. (Pp. 132-135).
- 1996 *Dec. 13:* Archbishop Castrillon (who later became Cardinal in 1998) wrote to

Bishop Moreno and urged him to ***“enter into meaningful dialogue with Monsignor Trupia regarding the terms of the solution he has proposed. In so doing Your Excellency would also be well advised to be fully informed of the provisions of canon law operative as well as, among other things, of the statements of the Holy See with regard to psychological testing. It must also be borne in mind that the matter of damages is not outside of the purview of any subsequent decision which may be rendered....Given the canonical actions which have already taken place and the particular history of the situation, this Congregation feels strongly that the most beneficial resolution of this matter could take place in a written agreement, consonant with the law, between yourself and Monsignor Trupia. Again, we reiterate that the terms proposed do not appear unreasonable in the circumstances and are worthy of serious consideration.”*** (pp.137-138. See Trupia’s letter, pp. 82-85)

- 1997 *Jan. 7:* Bishop Moreno replied to Archbishop Hoyos and provided a detailed list of reasons why Trupia’s solution, urged on him by the Archbishop, was not possible. (P. 139-141).

- 1997 *Jan. 31:* Archbishop Hoyos responded to Bishop Moreno’s letter and said ***“We deeply regret that you have seen fit to disregard our advice to come to an agreement with Monsignor Trupia.”*** This statement takes on much more importance if the content of Bishop Moreno’s Jan. 7 letter is taken into consideration. (p. 144)

- 1997 *Jan. ?:* Bishop Moreno responded to the Congregation but instead to Archbishop Crescenzo Sepe, the secretary and included more detailed information about Trupia’s crimes. (pp. 145-147)

- 1997 *Oct. 31:* Archbishop Hoyos wrote to Bishop Moreno to inform him that the Congregation for the Clergy had finished the consideration of the case and found in favor of Trupia. He then ordered the bishop to revoke any decisions he had made concerning Trupia. He repeated his suggestion about Trupia’s compromise: ***“It would appear beneficial to all concerned to enter into discussion with Monsignor Trupia according to the proposal already made by him and referred to by us in our letter of 13 December 1996.”*** The letter also told the Bishop that he was liable for damages that arose as a result of his decree. (P. 149)

- 1997 *Dec. 22:* Bishop Moreno sent a strong response to Archbishop Hoyos. (P. 145-147) (pp. 150-151)

- 2003 *Jan. 10:* The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote to Bishop

Moreno to inform him that Trupia had lodged a recourse (sent an appeal) to that congregation and asked for detailed information about the case. There is no documentation indicating the contents of Trupia's letter. (pp. 155-156)

- 2003 *Feb. 10:* Bishop Moreno wrote a detailed letter to Cardinal Ratzinger with information about the extensive sexual abuse. He asked that he be authorized to begin the penal process which would terminate in Trupia's dismissal from the priesthood. (P. 156-157) See also pp. 183-184) for a summary of the delicts (canonical crimes) upon which the penal action was based.
- 2003 *Mar. 5:* Bishop Moreno and the new auxiliary, Bishop Kicanas, sent a letter to Fr. Bryan Sherry, the Promoter of Justice (Diocesan prosecutor) informing him that they were going to write to Trupia to tell him to take up residence in a supervised setting within twenty days. If he failed to comply they would ask Rome for permission to begin the process for summary dismissal. (P. 158)
- 2003 *Mar. 28:* Bishop Kicanas wrote to Cardinal Ratzinger requesting an "*urgent administrative decision by the Holy See to dismiss him from the clerical state.*" (P. 159-160)
- 2003 *Apr. 28:* Bishop Kicanas wrote to Archbishop Amato, Secretary of the CDF, and urged immediate action. (P. 161-162)
- 2003 *May 8:* Archbishop Amato wrote back authorizing the commencement of the administrative penal process. (P. 163)
- 2003 *June 14:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Kicanas and informed him that he appealed to the CDF and asked that the penal procedure be conducted by them and not the diocese. (P. 169) He also threatened to appeal any attempt of the bishop to use the administrative process. (165-166).
- 2003 *June 18:* The CDF wrote to Bishop Moreno to inform him that they had denied Trupia's request to have his case heard by the Congregation as opposed to in the diocese. (P. 167)
- 2003 *July 20:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Moreno with more confusing objections to the latest decision of the CDF. In this letter he repeats two frequent objections: that no one has informed him of the accusations made against him and even more amazing, that he had never been given a right of defense. (P. 169-170)
- 2003 *Aug. 7:* Bishop Kicanas wrote to Trupia and informed him that the CDF

expected him to proceed with the process. He invited Trupia to meet with him, an offer Trupia refused. (pp. 172-173)

2003 *Nov. 29:* Trupia wrote to Bishop Kicanas and told him he would consider voluntary laicization on the condition that the bishop grant his request to retire with the attached conditions. (P. 181-182)

2004 *Aug. 7:* The Diocese of Tucson publicly announced that Robert Trupia had been involuntarily laicized by the Holy See. The announcement did not give the date of the laicization.

1. Robert Trupia had sexually abused boys from the time of ordination. Reports were made to either pastors or to the diocese beginning at least in March 1975 when Bishop Green questioned one of his victims and assured the victim that he would do something about it.
2. Bishop Green knew about Trupia's serial abuse. Rather than doing anything about it he bestowed on Trupia a series of official positions in the diocesan administration as well as important honors.

1976 On March 1, Trupia, ordained 3 years, was appointed deputy chief judge of the diocesan tribunal.

1976 On July 15 he was appointed vice-chancellor

1977 On Jan. 19 Bishop Green appointed Trupia Judicial Vicar or Chief Judge of the tribunal. Trupia had been ordained 4 years.

1977 June 15: Bishop Green sponsored Trupia as a candidate for the Order of the Holy Sepulchre.

1979 On May 29, six years after his ordination, Trupia was appointed a Chamberlain to the Pope with the title of Monsignor. This is highly unusual since the practice of the Holy See has been to restrict such honors to priests ordained much longer. The honor is bestowed by the pope upon the recommendation of the bishop.

3. Throughout the course of the canonical process which began in 1992, Trupia lodged at least seven separate appeals to the Vatican and all were based on the same issue: that Bishop Moreno had illegally imposed the restrictions of canon 1722 when he placed him on administrative leave. Throughout the process he conjured up numerous objections to minor points of law and was able to convince Bishop Moreno to believe his often inaccurate interpretations of the canons.
4. The most notorious response from the Vatican was that of Cardinal Castrillon-Hoyos who

was well aware of the serious charges and the credibility of the evidence. Nevertheless he urged the Bishop Moreno to cooperate in a cover-up suggested by a high official of the Holy See by allowing Trupia to retire and to continue functioning as a priest in spite of the fact that he had been credibly accused of the canonical crime of sexual abuse of a minor. In making these recommendations, Castrillon-Hoyos was not only trying to facilitate an unauthorized departure from procedural law, but he was also in direct violation of the canon that stipulates that those who, because of their office appear to condone the commission of a crime share in the liability for the crime.

5. The documents indicate that the original contact with the CDF was either late December or early January of 2003. Trupia's laicization was announced in August 2004.
6. The "Brief Chronology" from the civil case of Lehner vs. Diocese of Tucson is an accurate summary of the events in Trupia's life from 1967 through January 2004. This summary also contains information about other priests in the Tucson diocese who had sexually abused minors: Msgr. Oliver John Oliver, Fr. William Byrne and Fr. Pedro Luke. (pp. 188-203)
7. After Trupia left the diocese he worked for a time for the Tribunal of the Diocese of Monterey under the patronage of a Monsignor Charles G. Fatooh of that diocese. In 2001-2003 time period Trupia was living in various places in Maryland. (pp. 204-209)