

Archdiocese Behaves the Way It Does, Because It Can

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First, let me say the Archdiocesan Communications Director's comments in regard to the Philadelphia Magazine article are not worthy of response. But for those who would like to respond directly, her email is dfarrell@adphila.org.

Those who have the print edition of *Philadelphia Magazine's* July issue have probably already read editor Tom McGrath's comments "On the Church" on page 8. McGrath comments that the 2011 report is "essentially saying that little about the archdiocese's behavior had changed over the previous five years." Actually nothing substantive has changed in the archdiocese's behavior in the period between the 2005 and the 2011 Philadelphia grand jury reports on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Along with Bob Huber, McGrath asks, "how the archdiocese could continue to behave in the same way once the scandal had been exposed."

The answer to that question is profound in its simplicity. The archdiocese continued "to behave in the same way once the scandal had been exposed" was because it could, because it can.

Yes, because it could. That's part and parcel of the reality called "Clericalism." Bluntly put, it was/is standard operating procedure. Keeping secrets and avoiding scandal at all costs had been the order of the day for many decades. Money is the thread between keeping secrets and avoiding scandal with the operative phrase, "at all costs."

The breadth and depth of the sexual exploitation of children by clergy may have been exposed to the larger society in 2002 in the Archdiocese of Boston, Massachusetts and later in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia by the Boston Globe and the 2005 Philly grand jury report but it was not unknown by church authorities.

Cover-ups, intimidation, harassment and shunning followed reports of the sexual abuse of children for decades only most people were unaware of it, could or would not believe it or actually colluded in it.

The majority of Catholics in the five counties that comprise the Archdiocese of Philadelphia believed all the variations on the theme that church leadership put forth. Many statements coming from the cardinal archbishop's office were falsehoods and were documented to be so. The majority of Catholics wanted to believe that their spiritual leaders were telling the truth and that they would deal with this the way it should have been dealt with.

But that was never the reality. Neither the inner workings of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia regarding the sexual exploitation of children, young women, men, vulnerable adults including nuns nor the collusion and conspiracy of church authorities will be known until or unless all church documents involved are ordered to be made public by the courts as was the case in the Archdiocese of Boston, Massachusetts. There the chasm between Cardinal Bernard Law's public statements that he wanted the public to believe and the reality that existed in archdiocesan files, records and his correspondence was exposed for all the world to read.

Keep in mind that it is only the sexual exploitation of children that is being discussed here and the only predators that the institutional church is concerned about are clerics.

When I spoke with Pennsylvania Representative Michael McGeehan when he invited me to speak in Harrisburg to the importance of the bill he has introduced, House Bill 878, he told me that following the 2005 grand jury report he believed what church authorities said. He now believes that it is society's responsibility to protect all of Pennsylvania's children and that sexual predators and enablers, irrespective of their religious

affiliation, should be held to laws that are adequate to the problem of childhood sexual abuse which is an epidemic in this country.

Like Representative McGeehan, I expected the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church to be in the forefront in areas in sexual exploitation, whether that sexual exploitation is of children, young women, men or vulnerable adults. No only is the church not leading the parade in this area, it is not even bringing up the rear and that fact is evidenced in sentence after sentence in the grand jury reports in Philadelphia as well as other dioceses in the United States and around the world. That reality came home to me very early in 2002 when I took part in my first protest outside the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul on April 26, 2002. Both Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua and I were quoted on CNN that evening. Read my October 28, 2005 article in the National Catholic Reporter:

http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2005d/102805/102805x.htm

Further evidence is the fact that criminal and civil statutes of limitation have been viciously opposed by states' Catholic Conference whenever it has been proposed.

Yes, there was feigned outrage in 2005 from the archdiocese by way of Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young and their 76 page rebuttal, media statements and newspaper articles galore charging a conspiracy against the church, a resurgence of the No-Nothings of almost two centuries ago, homophobic rhetoric and so on down the line. Whatever floated or seem to stick at all was pursued and elaborated on. Who can forget former Pennsylvania Congressman Rick Santorum's comments on the sexual permissiveness of New Englanders?

Then there was the piece-de-resistance offered up by the archdiocese on September 15, 2006: "Witness to the Sorrow," a slickly orchestrated public relations promotional piece if ever there was one. I cannot fathom Mary Achilles returning to work for the archdiocese when so much of what she recommended or was a part of had no follow-up the first time around.

No, substantive changes did not occur during those five plus years. Individuals came and left from 222 North Seventeenth Street including the aforementioned Mary Achilles.

What changed when the 2011 report was released was that arrests were made. As I said on Larry Kane's Comcast Network earlier this year, criminal arrests were made and made possible because of some earlier changes in Pennsylvania's criminal statutes of limitation regarding the sexual abuse of children.

While still inadequate those changes allowed for the arrest of Msgr. William Lynn, formerly in charge of priest personnel from 1992 to 2004, basically for enabling sexual abuse and conspiracy along with four others who are variously charged with sexual abuse and conspiracy. That criminal charges were made has made all the difference in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Read "Where is the Outrage?" in the NCR at:

<http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/philadelphia-where-outrage>

Before Catholics contribute to this weekend's PETER PENCE COLLECTION they may want to read the June 24th editorial found on the National Survivor Advocates Coalition website at:

<http://nationalsurvivoradvocatescoalition.wordpress.com/editorials/>

as well as Jason Berry's new book, *Render Unto Rome, The Secret Life of Money in the Catholic Church*. Read some excerpts at:

http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Dstripbooks&field-keywords=jason+berry&x=10&y=19