

The Beginning of The End of The Bernardin Legacy

Introduction by Stephen Brady

Just what is the Bernardin Legacy? Ask that simple question to any Catholic and the answers you receive will vary from one extreme to the other. One either loved him or despised him. But regardless of your personal opinion of the man there is one point, I believe, we can all agree on: He was a powerful and influential individual, both politically and spiritually. James Hitchcock wrote in an article published shortly after the Cardinal's death that: "He [Bernardin] consistently used his influence to promote liberal causes, even attacks on Church teachings and traditions." Hitchcock went on to say: "...he consistently used his power to build a network of allies within both the hierarchy and the bureaucracy, a network which in effect has controlled the direction of the 'American Church'."

Bernardin received the Presidential award from President Clinton and was honored, posthumously, by the Masons. He was a friend of Call To Action (CTA) and allowed them to operate on Church property. He even went so far as to speak out against Bishop Bruskewitz for excommunicating CTA members in his own diocese. History has taught us that the Cardinal usually came down on the liberal side of every issue, but what is his legacy? What about his faith?

As Catholics we know that our purpose in life is to know, love, and serve God, and as Archbishop of Chicago Bernardin had an even greater responsibility. Defending the faith and safeguarding the souls of the faithful was his job. How did he do? What was the condition of the Church in Chicago at the time of his passing, after 15 years of his leadership? That is his legacy.

Who did he live with? Who were his friends? (According to the 11/97 *Washington Blade*, a homosexual newspaper, the Cardinal himself had arranged for the Windy City Gay Chorus to sing at his wake at Holy Name Cathedral. It did so behind a sign prominently displaying its name.) What kinds of men did he associate with and help elevate to bishop? Who praised him? Who followed him and what was the result? RCF has spent the last four years looking for those answers.

In 1996, RCF approached the Cardinal asking for his help in solving the problems faced by faithful Catholics in the Springfield diocese, the home of Bishop Ryan. His Eminence made it clear he would do nothing to help. But one could hardly blame him; back in Chicago dozens of schools and parishes were closing. Immoral sex education was common, and an alarming number of sex abuse cases were surfacing. Some of the Cardinal's closest friends, Msgr. Hopwood (who pled guilty to sexual abuse charges in 1994) from Charleston and Fr. Harsham from Cincinnati were accused of sexual abuse. Even the Cardinal was accused of abuse by Steve Cook. Cook later dropped his suit and many claimed that was proof of the Cardinal's innocence. But was it? According to a 6/18/98 *Wanderer* article by Paul Likoudis, Msgr. Hopwood was "not your ordinary pedophile. He did hundreds of boys, and I can't imagine Bernardin not being aware of it, since they lived together for such a long time." RCF recently contacted one of Hopwood's victims and discovered that the law firm which represents the Chicago Archdiocese brokered the settlements with some of Msgr. Hopwood's victims.

Many newspaper and magazine articles have been written regarding the Cardinal's life. Some suggested he was an active homosexual and did indeed have a relationship with Cook. I had a conversation with a Vatican official as well as a Chicago priest who mentioned an alleged incident in California. But where is the proof?

Many individuals find it difficult to accept the fact that any bishop could ever deny the faith, let alone sexually abuse a child. But recent history proves otherwise. Bishop Symons of Palm Beach, Florida, resigned after admitting he sexually abused altar boys while a priest. The bishop claimed it happened 30 years ago. Why, then, did he resign 30 years after the fact? Public exposure--that's why. Bishop Ziemann of Santa Rosa, California, also resigned after admitting a two year sexual affair with a priest he brought into the country from Costa Rica. He stepped down after the priest threatened a lawsuit.

While we realize that sexual perversion is a sure sign one has fallen from grace, what else does it tell us--especially when the pervert/predator is a Catholic priest or bishop? Experience has taught us that, more often than not, when we find a priest or bishop whose flock has been subjected to liturgical abuse or heresy you will find a priest or bishop with a sexual weakness or perversion (liturgical abuse and heresy along with case after case of the sexual abuse of children by clergy has long been part of the Chicago Church: The real Bernardin legacy, some might say). The question is: Which came first? This brings to mind the statement: "the first sign of a bankrupt spirituality is a disordered sexuality."

The Bernardin legacy is the current condition of the Catholic Church in America. From his days as Chancellor in South Carolina to Chief of Staff and then President of the NCCB to the Cardinal of Chicago, Bernardin has been a force in the Church and is responsible, in part, for what we have today. Look around? what do you see? The evidence is there. One diocese after another is dying out with no sign of help coming from Rome. The Catholic faithful are on their own. But what about the charges of sexual abuse? RCF has been searching for those answers. Police officers, lawyers, private investigators, and clergy have provided RCF with details of alleged abuse by the Cardinal, but no one has been able (or in some cases, willing) to provide first-hand information--that is--until now.

If you are still with us--still reading--but are not ready to hear the truth: *Please go no further*. We are going to present you the story of "Agnes," an 11-year-old child, along with information RCF received from a former seminarian who admitted to a 4 year sexual relationship with a Catholic bishop.

It was not quite 6:00 am on Thursday, April 6, 2000. I was on my way to the Amtrak station to catch the train to Chicago. I was looking forward to the ride to Chicago, the 4 hours it would take to reach my destination would give me plenty of time to reflect on the chain of events that had brought me to this place and time in history. A train ride to Chicago was nothing new for me but the purpose of the trip was somewhat unsettling to say the least.

I had been asked to travel to Chicago to provide federally funded investigators with information Roman Catholic Faithful (RCF) had obtained. A 1984 unsolved Chicago murder had been reopened. While RCF had no information about the murder, we did have information regarding an alleged clergy pedophile ring operating in Chicago that may have been connected to the murder. Now this story, and that of an 11 year-old

child known as Agnes, along with the 1998 murder of Fr. Alfred Kunz, (a priest advisor to RCF) and many other Church-related events will be always present--buried within the pictures permanently implanted in my mind. The one common denominator in this sordid mess seemed to be Father/Bishop/Cardinal Bernardin and his machine.

If Andrew Greeley had only known the chain of events his new book was about to set in motion he may have never published it. Neither Greeley nor the Chicago church were new to scandal or controversy. Greeley has made his living, it seems, playing one side against the other in Church politics.

Over the last 30 years, under the leadership of Cardinals Cody, Bernardin, and George, Chicago Catholics have been subjected to all sorts of scandal--the worst being the sexual abuse of children and the cover-up by the hierarchy. General absolution goes on, even today, at Holy Name Cathedral in Chicago, and Communication Ministry, Inc. (CMI), a not-for-profit corporation whose members are homosexual clergy and religious, operates out of Chicago today, and its board of directors includes a Chicago priest and nun. (More on CMI, and its connection to the American hierarchy, in other reports contained in this newsletter).

Fr. Greeley's newly published book *Furthermore! Memories of a Parish Priest*, was released on December 1, 1999. The following quote from page 80 of Greeley's book set in motion a chain of events that led to my trip to Chicago.

...But even in Chicago, the ring of predators about whom I wrote in the paperback edition of Confessions remains untouched. There is no evidence against them because no one has complained about them and none of their fellow Priests have denounced them. Those who have been removed are for the most part lone offenders who lacked the skill to cover their tracks. The ring is much more clever. Perhaps they always will be. But should they slip, should they get caught, the previous scandals will seem trivial...

A footnote states:

They are a dangerous group. There is reason to believe that they are responsible for at least one murder, and may perhaps have been involved in the murder of the murderer. Am I afraid of them? Not particularly. They know that I have in safekeeping information which would implicate them. I am more of a threat to them dead than alive. (p. 80)

What is one to think of Greeley's admission? If he indeed has evidence concerning an unsolved murder would he not be obliged to step forward and share this information with local authorities? One would think a Catholic priest would be the first to seek justice for the victim and thereby possibly prevent this "ring of predators" he speaks of from harming another child. What about Cardinal George's responsibility in all this. Has Greeley, in his effort to sell his books, suggested a cover-up. If that is the case, by his own admission, he has been part of the cover-up and his silence may well have contributed to the sexual abuse of other children.

Page 80 of Greeley's book deeply disturbed at least five businessmen in Chicago. While one wrote the Chicago Police, the other four wrote Cardinal George and all demanded an investigation and called on the

Cardinal to make Greeley produce the information he had in "safekeeping." It wasn't long until a murder investigator, working for the local District Attorney's office, showed up at the office of one of the Chicago businessmen who had demanded action from the Cardinal.

My train arrived in Chicago at 10:00 AM. From Union station I walked to an office building several blocks away where I met the five Chicago businessmen who had called Greeley to account. We had time for lunch prior to a 1:00 PM meeting with the federally funded, murder investigator.

On May 30, 1984 Francis E. Pellegrini, 47, was found murdered in his apartment at 2953 S. Parnell Ave. in Chicago. He had been stabbed at least 20 times. His dog had also been stabbed. Pellegrini was the organist and choir director at All Saints-St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church located at 518 W. 28th Place in Chicago. He was also assistant professor of Sociology and Social Science at City College. There are those who believe that Pellegrini was about to expose the "Boys Club," an alleged group of pedophile clergy operating out of Chicago. RCF received information regarding the existence of the "Boys Club" while it was investigating Springfield's homosexual bishop Daniel Ryan, who resigned from his see on Oct. 19, 1999. Ryan was an active homosexual who had sex with priests and male prostitutes as young as 15. Ryan was chancellor of the Joliet diocese and spent many years in and around the Chicago area. Bishop Imesch of Joliet is also no stranger to scandal and he, too, has spent many years in the Chicago area and was included in the Bernardin Circle of Friends. Imesch came from Detroit where he and Bishop [Thomas] Gumbleton worked under Cardinal Deardon. Gumbleton is well known for his support of dissenting homosexual groups. Imesch, as bishop of Joliet, according to statements from two attorneys, has lied under oath in an apparent effort to protect pedophile priests (much more on Imesch will be covered in a future edition). The murder investigation is ongoing.

At this point in time RCF believes the Catholic population may be ready to hear Agnes' story. (Her name, of course, is not Agnes; that is the name given her by Malachi Martin in his fictionalized retelling of her story). She is a real person, and has gone on to live her life as a faithful Catholic.

Prior to exposing such serious and scandalous materials to the reader, we ought to remind ourselves that although the Catholic laity may never know the good vs. evil struggles that take place within the Church hierarchy, one thing we do know is that there is an element within the Church that is controlled by "The Father of Lies." (This was alluded to by Pope Paul VI himself). We may never know the whole story, the whole truth until the day we stand in judgment. It is enough that we do all we can to protect the innocent by shining the light of truth on those who operate in the dark. And it is the least we can do: it is a bit of justice for the victims.

Several months ago I received a phone call, followed by a statement, from a young man in the Detroit area who was abused by a priest when he was only 14 years old. He was married now and had a family. He had never told anyone of the abuse but upon finding RCF's web page, wanted to call and thank us for all that we are doing. RCF checked out his story and found that the priest who had abused him had been arrested for molesting other children and had moved to the Joliet diocese.

I have heard many similar horror stories in the last four years. Upon meeting and getting to know those who were the victims of childhood sexual abuse, I found they react in many different ways. It is heartbreaking to

hear their stories and learn of their lost innocence. In each and every one of them I met, I saw the face of one of my children, and I wondered how on earth they managed to survive the ordeal. Often the only defense they had was the ability to block the memory from their minds. Some of the abused went on to abuse others or turned to drugs or alcohol to wipe away the memory and pain. There were those who, as teenagers, ended up selling their bodies to survive, living on the streets. As though they had not suffered enough, those few who did approach Church authorities were often treated as if they were the enemy. I have seen it happen.

The youngest victim of childhood sexual abuse I had ever known was only 7 when I met her. The state had placed her in our home for a short time because her parents were unable to care for her. No one knew at the time that she had been abused. Her psychological difficulties became evident to my wife and me when the child started to act out while in our home and around our younger children. I sat in the courtroom with the child when her parents had to appear before the judge to answer the charges against them. I received an education that day.

But allow me to get back to Agnes. Agnes has a family and grown children now. She and her husband live in a southern state. Her husband makes a living in law enforcement.

I first heard of Agnes' story from a friend in 1996. This friend of mine had met Agnes a few years earlier when she came to him for advice. He never gave me her name or location but only made reference to her situation because it fit into a conversation we were having regarding the Archdiocese of Chicago. In 1998, when I first learned who Agnes was, I found that she had been on RCF's mailing list for some time. I also learned that a private investigator, as well as a lawyer from Chicago who had provided RCF with information, had met with Agnes a few years earlier in an attempt to help her find a way to bear witness to what had happened to her. This same investigator and lawyer provided RCF with information they had obtained regarding the alleged sexual activity of the priest who had abused Agnes many years earlier. That priest was the young Joseph Bernardin.

Over the past 12 years, in sworn deposition, in accounts to investigators, in affidavits submitted in support of others' cases, in direct statements to Bernardin, in phone calls and letters to Church officials, and in correspondence with Vatican officials (all of which RCF has examined), Agnes has testified to the following story:

In the fall of 1957, in Greenville, S.C., Fr. Joseph Bernardin raped 11-year-old Agnes as part of a Satanic ritual that involved, among others, Bishop John Russell of Charleston. Brought to the event by an abusive father, Agnes "was able, at first, to resist Bishop Russell physically, out of the knowledge that God had made me good, not bad as I was being told I was" (her words). As a young child, she had been victimized by a "sadist" cousin, and her identity was based upon "resisting bad things", which included Bernardin. Bernardin then showed kindness and approval of her resistance, in order to gain her trust and get her to relax, and then he raped her. He followed the rape with a perverted use of a host, in an attempt to make Agnes swallow the guilt of the event.

In the fall of 1992, Agnes passed a polygraph examination regarding these events. She also, in early 1990, told her story to Malachi Martin, who had been recommended to her as someone who could get her

information to the Vatican, which Agnes knew had sole and immediate jurisdiction over such a case. Martin wrote a novel, *Windswept House*, with the premise that Agnes had given him: that the Catholic hierarchy's tolerance of heresy, liturgical abuse, clerical sexual misconduct, and clerical pedophilia had one overarching explanation at root, a network of Satanists whose smoke had ascended high in the Church. Her story is greatly theatricalized in the novel, but the essential fact of ritual rape is there, as is the spiritual reality of Christ's presence in the victimized child. Thirty-four years later, Agnes went to visit Bishop Russell in a nursing home. In and out of lucidity, he agreed to testify against Bernardin if asked. He died without the opportunity to do so.

Agnes later came to know Steve Cook, and submitted an affidavit in support of his suit. Before he died, Cook told Agnes he was writing a book to tell the truth about his abuse, and he gave a different account of his lawsuit retraction than the one publicly accepted.

Someone who knew Cook earlier than Agnes is a former seminarian RCF interviewed who admitted to a four-year sexual relationship with a Catholic bishop who now heads a western diocese. This man stated that he also had forced sexual contact with Cardinal Bernardin, and that, through Bernardin, he came to know Steven Cook. This individual, interviewed in November of 1998 by RCF, claims to have received a cash settlement. RCF confirmed, through an attorney, that this seminarian did indeed receive a cash settlement.

In June of 1998 RCF interviewed a Chicago businessman whose son was abused by a Chicago priest a few years earlier (1980's). In 1989 this Chicago businessman met with Cardinal Edouard Gagnon. He gave me the following account of his conversation with the Cardinal. (He also directed me to Jason Berry's book, *Lead Us Not into Temptation*, for an account of his family's story). The Cardinal stated that the Holy See had received hundreds of letters regarding the pedophile problem in the U.S. and that it was beyond the control of the Holy See as the Church is in schism and the American bishops will not obey the Holy Father.

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