

Section IV

How Msgr. Lynn Endangered Children

As Secretary for Clergy under Cardinal Bevilacqua, Msgr. Lynn was responsible for protecting the welfare of children entrusted to the Archdiocese's care by ensuring that no priest with a history of sexual abuse of minors was put in a position to prey on them. It was Msgr. Lynn's job to investigate any allegations of sexual abuse by priests, and to review the Archdiocese's secret archive files, where complaints were recorded. He was in a position to make sure that no priest with a history of sexual abuse of minors was recommended for assignments, much less for assignments with continued access to children.

Yet, time after time, Msgr. Lynn abdicated this responsibility. He did so, moreover, not through negligence or simple incompetence, but *purposefully*. He did so, with Cardinal Bevilacqua's knowledge and at the Cardinal's direction, as part of a knowing practice – continued over decades – of placing sexual predators in positions where they would have easy access to trusting minors, just as long as the Archdiocese was spared public exposure or costly lawsuits.

Msgr. Lynn did more than passively allow the molesters to *remain* in positions where they could continue to prey on children. When victims complained or scandal threatened, he recommended to the Cardinal that the abusers be *transferred to new parishes*, where the unsuspecting faithful would not know to be wary and vigilant, and where the abusive clergymen could go on exploiting their positions of trust and authority

to pursue their criminal depravity. In this way, Msgr. Lynn effectively shielded the predator priests from accountability and ensured them a continuing supply of victims.

The Secretary for Clergy could at any time have referred serious allegations to law enforcement officials, who could have conducted proper investigations. That is certainly what any of us, the Grand Jurors, would have done in Msgr. Lynn's position. Protecting children was his duty. It just was not his priority.

Based on the evidence before us, it is clear that the Secretary for Clergy was acutely interested in shielding abusive clergy from criminal detection, in shielding the Cardinal from scandal, and in shielding the Archdiocese from financial liability. He showed no interest at all in defending the Archdiocese's children. On the contrary, he consistently endangered them.

Msgr. Lynn has a long history of transferring abusive priests to unsuspecting parishes.

We have already discussed in detail how, despite receiving reliable reports that Father Avery had sexually abused a boy and should not be permitted to engage in any ministry that involved working with adolescents, Msgr. Lynn recommended him for assignment to a parish with a school, and then ignored repeated warnings that he was engaging in unsupervised activities in which he could victimize more children.

Similarly, after learning that Father Brennan was suspected of hosting parties where he allowed students to drink, and was even living with one of those students, whom he claimed was a nephew, Msgr. Lynn conducted no investigation. (Such an investigation would have revealed the private "wrestling" sessions with minors.) He did

not call law enforcement, or take action to keep Father Brennan away from adolescents. Instead, he recommended him for transfer to a new parish where he would be able to have unsupervised contact with children and teenage minors.

These were not in any way isolated incidents. The previous grand jury documented many prior cases in which Msgr. Lynn knowingly allowed priests who had sexually abused minors to be assigned to positions where unsuspecting parents and teachers would entrust children to their care. Those cases did not provide grounds for independent criminal charges because they were outside the statute of limitations. However, Pennsylvania law does allow them to be used to establish a common scheme, knowledge, and intent on Msgr. Lynn's part to endanger the welfare of children.

Below, we briefly summarize five representative cases in which Msgr. Lynn knowingly placed child molesters in positions in which they would have unsupervised contact with children. Such summaries can scarcely begin to describe how dangerous and indefensible Msgr. Lynn's conduct was when it came to dealing with abusive priests. A comprehensive description of these and other cases in which Msgr. Lynn knowingly exposed children to predatory priests can be found in the September 15, 2005, Grand Jury Report, which is available at:

http://www.philadelphiadistrictattorney.com/images/Grand_Jury_Report.pdf.

Rev. Stanley Gana

Rev. Stanley Gana, ordained in 1970, sexually abused countless boys in a succession of Philadelphia parishes. He was known to kiss, fondle, anally sodomize, and

impose oral sex on his victims. He took advantage of altar boys, their trusting families, and vulnerable teenagers with emotional problems. He took groups of adolescent male parishioners on overnight trips, and would rotate them through his bed. He collected nude pornographic photos of his victims. He molested boys on a farm, in vacation houses, in the church rectory. Some minors he abused for years.

During and even before Msgr. Lynn's tenure as Secretary of Clergy, he was aware of much of the sexual abuse committed by Father Gana. Yet Msgr. Lynn thwarted efforts to have him removed from active ministry. Two victims came forward in the 1990s to describe specifics of their abuse and provide the names of other victims. They begged Msgr. Lynn and his colleagues in the Archdiocese to take away Father Gana's cover as a priest in good standing, to stop facilitating his exploitation of minors.

Soon after the second victim came forward, Msgr. Lynn even learned that Father Gana had *admitted* the sexual abuse during therapy sessions. Moreover, both victims provided Msgr. Lynn with corroborating witnesses, and at least one of them was deemed credible by Msgr. Lynn even before Father Gana's admission. In addition, Msgr. Lynn knew that Father Gana was still living with students at the time the abuse reports were coming in.

Despite this overwhelming evidence that Father Gana was a dangerous sexual predator, Msgr. Lynn took no steps to have him removed from active ministry, or even to protect the students who were living with him at the time of the reports. Quite the opposite, as documented by the previous grand jury, Msgr. Lynn spent a decade improperly investigating Father Gana's *victims* rather than Father Gana; misleading the

priest's treatment team so its members would not know the full extent of his criminal misconduct; and explicitly supporting Father Gana's successful effort to remain in active ministry, where he continued to perform Mass with altar boys.

When asked by one of the victims to explain this unconscionable breach of duty, which endangered countless minors while perpetuating Father Gana's crime spree, Msgr. Lynn could offer only the *non sequitur* that the priest's misconduct had not been limited to having sex with children and teenage minors. Father Gana had also slept with adults, abused alcohol, and stolen money from parish churches. "You see," said Msgr. Lynn, "he's not a pure pedophile."

Rev. Nicholas V. Cudemo

Rev. Nicholas V. Cudemo, ordained in 1963, was described as "one of the sickest people I ever knew" by Msgr. Molloy, Cardinal Bevilacqua's Vicar for Administration. Father Cudemo raped an 11-year-old girl, molested a fifth grader in the confessional, invoked God to seduce and shame his victims, and maintained sexually abusive relationships simultaneously with several girls from the Catholic school where he was a teacher. His own family sued him for molesting a cousin.

According to the Archdiocese's files, it received formal complaints against Father Cudemo from 12 different victims over a period of nearly four decades. Church officials had good reason – including statements from Father Cudemo himself – to believe that even that figure significantly understated the true number of children he abused.

Msgr. Lynn personally interviewed Father Cudemo about the allegations of sexual abuse, and obtained from him a rambling mixture of admissions and denials. The priest told him that he “possibly” lay nude on top of an undressed girl; that he had been confronted by a girl about touching her and performing sexual acts on her, but didn’t remember doing those things and “I remember everything”; that he had “known lots of women and that it always takes two to do these things;” that if sexual activities did occur, they must have happened 20 years ago; that all the girls were willing, and that “nothing close to sexual happened with these girls.” When told that some of his accusers were from his own family, he immediately said their names and acknowledged having “incidents” with them.

In 1996, a panel of pastors recommended Father Cudemo’s removal as pastor due to “several grave causes.” By that point, Msgr. Lynn was aware of at least 10 formal allegations against the priest involving sexual abuse of girls. Yet one year later, in 1997, the Secretary for Clergy presented Father Cudemo with a certificate declaring him a retired priest “in good standing” in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and asking that he be permitted to function as a priest in any other diocese in the country. In March 2003, Father Cudemo told one of his former victims that the certificate was allowing him to minister in Orlando, Florida, where he now lives part-time.

Rev. David C. Sicoli

According to a 2004 report by the Archdiocesan Review Board, Rev. David C. Sicoli was the subject of “multiple substantiated allegations [of sexual abuse] involving a

total of 11 minors over an extensive period of time beginning in 1977 and proceeding to 2002.” Father Sicoli paid for tuition, computers, and trips to Africa and Disney World for parish boys to whom he took a particular liking. He invited several to live in his rectories with him, and he gave them high-paying jobs and leadership positions in the Church’s youth group, the CYO. In many instances, he sexually abused them and treated them as if they were his paramours.

Between 1993 and 2002, Msgr. Lynn received numerous, credible reports from both victims and priests stationed with Father Sicoli that he had engaged in a series of sexual and otherwise inappropriate relationships with boys, two of whom were living with him full-time at his rectory. Yet Msgr. Lynn took no steps to investigate those allegations. He did not prohibit Father Sicoli from having unsupervised contact with children. He did not even warn the parents of the priest’s *current victims*.

Instead, Msgr. Lynn followed his customary practice, carrying out the Cardinal’s wishes in such matters. The Secretary for Clergy prevented Father Sicoli’s predatory history from coming to light by lying to the Archdiocese’s own mental health evaluators about the nature and extent of the allegations against the priest.

Msgr. Lynn’s solution to the problem of other priests complaining about Father Sicoli’s inappropriate relationships with children was to successfully recommend to Cardinal Bevilacqua that he be assigned to “one-man parishes,” where he would be the only priest. This meant that Father Sicoli, whose extensive reported history of sexually abusing children at his parishes was well known to Msgr. Lynn, would have exclusive

charge of all youth activities in those churches, with no one to report, and possibly prevent, future abuse.

Rev. John P. Connor

Rev. John P. Connor, who had been arrested and placed on probation for sexually abusing a 14-year-old student in his home diocese of Camden, New Jersey, served from 1988 until 1993 as assistant pastor of Saint Matthew Parish in Conshohocken with Cardinal Bevilacqua's blessing. When Archbishop Bevilacqua knowingly assigned this admitted child molester to duties at Saint Matthew Church, it was with the directive to "educate youth."

A year after Father Connor returned to Camden, a priest and a teacher from Saint Matthew warned Msgr. Lynn that Father Connor was continuing a suspiciously close "relationship" he had developed with an eighth-grade boy at the Conshohocken parish. Upon receiving these reports, Msgr. Lynn acted in his predictable way. He notified the Archdiocese's attorney, but not the boy's mother who – unlike Msgr. Lynn – had no way of knowing the priest she trusted with her son was an admitted sex offender.

Msgr. John E. Gillespie

In 1994, two brothers confronted Msgr. John E. Gillespie, accusing him of repeatedly fondling their genitals nearly 40 years earlier at Immaculate Conception Parish in Levittown. Msgr. Gillespie, who was now the pastor at Our Lady of Calvary Parish in Northeast Philadelphia, personally informed Msgr. Lynn of the accusations. He also

showed Msgr. Lynn letters he had written to his victims, apologizing, explaining, and trying to persuade them that events had not happened precisely as the victims remembered.

Despite Msgr. Gillespie's decision to literally hand Msgr. Lynn admissions of guilt, the Secretary for Clergy conducted no investigation of the abuse, and made no effort to contact the victims. Instead, his only actions were to inform the Archdiocese's legal counsel of the situation, and to instruct Msgr. Gillespie (who, unlike Msgr. Lynn and the rest of the Archdiocese hierarchy, at least had the decency to offer an apology) not to write to the victims again.

In 1997, Msgr. Lynn received a fresh report of misconduct by Msgr. Gillespie, this time from the mother of a 12-year-old boy who came to Msgr. Lynn to complain about sexually charged questions that Msgr. Gillespie had asked her son during confession. Msgr. Lynn once again refused to conduct any investigation, this time citing the seal of confession.

In January 2000, another of Msgr. Gillespie's past victims came forward, a 29-year-old police officer who reported to Msgr. Lynn that Msgr. Gillespie had repeatedly fondled him throughout his time in high school. In February 2000, after Msgr. Gillespie admitted inappropriately touching that victim and several other boys, a treatment team for the Archdiocese concluded that he "would be a risk to have in parish work." This was so, according to the report to church officials, not only because of the sexual abuse and its impact on the victims, but also because of the priest's "drivenness to make amends."

After receiving the hospital's report and a recommendation from Msgr. Lynn on March 3, 2000, Cardinal Bevilacqua decided that Msgr. Gillespie should be asked to resign as pastor of Our Lady of Calvary. In a note to Msgr. Lynn, the Cardinal suggested that Msgr. Gillespie be offered "Senior Priest status" or that he resign "for health reasons." Msgr. Gillespie acceded to Cardinal Bevilacqua's wishes and tendered his resignation, but he nevertheless was permitted to continue as pastor for three more months until a new pastor was named in June 2000. When asked by the previous grand jury why he allowed a priest deemed "dangerous" by his own therapists to continue serving as pastor for even three months, the Cardinal explained, "That was a judgment by Monsignor Lynn."

Even after Msgr. Gillespie's resignation as pastor, he was allowed to continue in active ministry, including hearing confessions of schoolchildren. It was not until Msgr. Lynn received a report, in November 2001, of yet another victim that the Secretary for Clergy wrote: "I told Monsignor Gillespie that because of these rumors, and in order to preserve his reputation and the reputation of the Church, I thought it might be best if he retire."

Meanwhile, Msgr. Gillespie's victims, denied the apology that might have helped them move on, continued to suffer. In an e-mail forwarded to Msgr. Lynn in March 2002, the future police officer whom Msgr. Gillespie had molested revealed his unredeemed sense of betrayal. After finding out that Msgr. Gillespie continued to give Communion to children, even after he had told Msgr. Lynn of the priest's offenses, the victim wrote:

“Basically I was lied to by [Msgr.] Lynn who said that the pastor would never be around children anymore.”

A common element in the cases cited here, as well as in the cases investigated by this Grand Jury, is that abusive priests were able to secure victims and molest, sodomize, or rape them *because* of actions taken deliberately by Msgr. Lynn.

The priests were able to abuse children because the Secretary for Clergy and other church officials chose not to respond to multiple reports of misconduct by initiating even half-serious investigations, by contacting law enforcement, or by moving to keep the predators away from children. The perpetrators were able to continue their crime sprees for decades because Msgr. Lynn knowingly recommended, and Cardinal Bevilacqua routinely approved, successive transfers to positions that maintained the predator priests’ good standing, their revered authority, and their access to minors.

Moreover, the danger to which Msgr. Lynn, with Cardinal Bevilacqua’s knowledge, exposed literally thousands of innocents in Philadelphia over the years was not limited to the sexual transgressions themselves. Abuse victims have subsequently suffered lifetimes of anguish and torment, often haunted by depression, crises of faith, alienation from family, and debilitating alcohol or drug addictions.

Having enabled the abuse to occur in the first place by granting criminal priests authority over and access to victims, Msgr. Lynn and the Cardinal compounded the victims’ pain by withholding the comfort that an official apology or even an acknowledgement of their suffering would have provided.