

The Case of Father Raymond Lukac

Known Assignments

06/21/1954	Saints Cyril & Methodius, Fairchance
06/29/1955	Holy Trinity, Ford City
1957	Servants of the Paraclete, New Mexico
08/01/1961	Diocese of Gary, Indiana
07/03/1963	St. Stanislaus, Posen, Illinois
01/16/1964	Immaculate Conception, Clarksburg, West Virginia
Various	Veterans Administration Service

Father Raymond Lukac was ordained within the Diocese of Greensburg in 1954. According to records in Lukac's Diocesan file, his ordination in 1954 was preceded by considerable resistance by Church officials to Lukac joining the priesthood. This resistance was in response to his refusal to conform his conduct to that expected of a priest and resulted in Lukac being briefly dropped as a seminary student, before being readmitted under strict conditions. Lukac's refusal or inability to follow the rules of the priesthood, despite the consistent consternation and discipline of Church officials, was a trend that continued throughout his tenure as a priest.

In April 1955, soon after Lukac's ordination, the Chancellor of the Diocese of Greensburg, Cyril Vogel, met with Lukac regarding a "serious matter." According to numerous handwritten letters from parishioners of Saints Cyril & Methodius appearing in Lukac's Diocesan file, members of Lukac's parish were complaining that he appeared to have been romantically involved with the 18-year-old organist for the parish (Victim One). Several parishioners expressed concern over having seen Lukac with the teen late at night, including one writing that Lukac was observed in Victim One's company while "driving away with the lights off." Father Anthony Hardy, head pastor at Saints Cyril and Methodius's, complained to the Diocese that "he is the talk of the parish and the community everywhere."

Diocesan records showed that, in order to distance Lukac from the brewing scandal, he was transferred to Holy Trinity in June 1955. In July 1955, Lukac signed a pledge that he would no longer see Victim One or have any communication with her whatsoever.

Approximately one year later, Father Matthew Yanosek, the head pastor of the Holy Trinity parish, discovered that Lukac was involved with a 17-year-old girl (Victim Two). Yanosek made a verbal report to the Diocese in the summer of 1956 about the matter and, by December 1956, Yanosek had learned that the relationship between Lukac and Victim Two had continued. Concerned of possible scandal, Yanosek wrote a three-page letter, dated December 13, 1956, that the Grand Jury obtained from Diocesan files. The letter, addressed to Bishop Hugh Lamb, stated, in part:

This past summer I made a verbal report on a scandal in our community which involved Father Lukac... Your Excellency's advice at that time was for me to give him a canonical warning and then if he failed to put it in writing and make it a matter for the Chancery Office. Father Lukac was advised of this and the rules set down for him were 1. No social visiting 2. No driving girls in his car. He has violated these rules. Many times and I have warned him many times.

Yanosek further explained that, upon his return from a trip to Detroit, the housekeeper for the rectory reported witnessing Lukac enter the rectory with Victim Two and observed the teen in Lukac's bed. Yanosek wrote that he "called the father of this child and reported the situation."

Yanosek also told Bishop Lamb that he had found a wedding ring and a marriage certificate in Lukac's room. The marriage certificate indicated Lukac had married Victim Two on November 20, 1956, at Holy Trinity Church and included the seal of the Church and Yanosek's forged signature. It did not appear that this forged marriage certificate was associated with a formal, legal marriage.

The Grand Jury determined that the date of the marriage certificate was not coincidental; November 20 was the date Victim Two turned 18 years old. Yanosek concluded his letter by

stating, "(Lukac) has lied to me so many times and I suspect him of thievery. For the best of all concerned, I beg your Excellency, please replace him."

In response to Yanosek's letter, Lamb wrote a letter to the Archbishop of Philadelphia, John O'Hara, on January 12, 1957, requesting his assistance in the matter. Lamb explained that there "is a danger of scandal" and that the Diocese felt Lukac should be removed "for the good of his own soul and for the welfare of the church." Despite having the marriage certificate as proof of a relationship between Lukac and a minor, Lamb told O'Hara, "there is no conclusive proof that he has gone the limit in the three cases brought to our attention of the two parishes to which he has been assigned." Additionally, the Grand Jury's review of Yanosek's Diocesan file found various letters from parishioners complaining of Lukac's contact with teens. Specific details regarding the third case Bishop Lamb referenced were not contained within Diocesan records.

Lamb asked O'Hara to send Lukac to Padua Retreat House in Pocopson, Chester County. Lamb wrote that "the other two young priests of this diocese who were given hospitality there profited much by the experience." It is unclear who these other two priests were or why they were sent to Padua House. However, Diocesan records revealed that, before Lamb made final arrangements to send Lukac on the planned retreat, Lukac eloped with Victim Two to Virginia. By January 18, 1957, the date of the marriage, Victim Two was over 18 and a legal marriage was recorded on that date.

Despite his elopement, Lukac returned to the Church and, in July 1957, was sent for treatment and repentance at Foundation House operated by the Servants of the Paraclete in Jemez Springs, New Mexico. Foundation House was a facility that provided evaluations and treatment for priests accused of sexual abuse of children or other improper acts. Father Lukac thereafter

divorced Victim Two in December 1957. According to several documents in Lukac's file, Victim Two bore Lukac a child.

Lukac remained in New Mexico until August 1, 1961. Upon his departure from Foundation House, he did not return to the Diocese. Rather, while still under the authority of the Diocese, Lukac was granted the necessary permission to serve within the Diocese of Gary, Indiana. In a letter dated June 30, 1961, the Bishop of Gary, Andrew Grutka, accepted Lukac into his Diocese on “a trial basis.” Lukac was given all faculties of the priesthood in the Diocese of Gary, with the exception of the ability to hear confessions.

While the Grand Jury did not locate any documentation formally assigning Lukac to serve at schools within the Gary Diocese, it is clear from references in various letters and documents appearing in Lukac's Diocesan file that he served as a high school teacher at Bishop Noll Institute in Hammond, Indiana.

In a letter from Grutka to Connare dated June 13, 1963, Grutka directed that Lukac was “to leave the Diocese of Gary” on June 30, 1963. While Grutka explained that the Diocese no longer had a need for Lukac, he ended his letter with the following: “He is also troubled with impetuosity with a tendency toward indiscreetness. In my humble opinion an assignment in a Boys’ school would be in the best interest of Father Lukac.”

On June 15, 1963, a letter was dispatched from Brother I. Conrad, the Superintendent of Bishop Noll Institute, to Connare. Conrad’s letter offered the following assessment of Lukac:

Father Lukac’s besetting fault seems to be a lack of prudence. This has been noticed in his dealings with some of the students, particularly the girls... However, I am not aware of any scandals in this regard, although his conduct at times gave me a few moments of uneasiness and apprehension.

On June 19, 1963, Connare responded by letter thanking Conrad for the “confidential” information he had provided.

Lukac's removal from the Diocese of Gary resulted in Connare endeavoring to find him a new ministry. On June 17, 1963, Connare wrote a memorandum to Monsignor Norbert Gaughan of the Diocese of Greensburg in which he sought to move Lukac while instructing Gaughan to "[w]atch and carefully guard secrecy of this."

MEMORANDUM

FROM: BISHOP CONNARE
TO: *Mssgr. Gaughan*
DATE: *6-17-63*
RE:
MESSAGE:

*Watch and carefully guard
secrecy of this.
My thought is to move through
Via Coeli —
before or after reply to this
letter?
They might be able to make
better contacts than I.*

DG0022823

Memorandum of Bishop Connare

In numerous letters contained within the secret archives of the Diocese of Greensburg, Connare attempted to find Lukac a "benevolent bishop" to accept him into another diocese.

On June 21, 1963, the Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, Leo Pursley, wrote a letter to Connare stating, "the truth is that I have taken in quite a number of problem priests without

much success, but I will certainly give Father Lukac every possible consideration.” Ultimately, Lukac was not accepted into the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

Lukac moved to St. Stanislaus in Posen, Illinois, in July 1963, although he did not live there under an official capacity. Rather, according to a July 23, 1963, memorandum written by Chancellor F. W. Byrne of the Archdiocese of Chicago, Lukac arrived at St. Stanislaus through his friendship with Father Stanley Dopek, the pastor of St. Stanislaus, who had invited Lukac to live with him in the parish. Byrne noted that the Archdiocese of Chicago would not accept Lukac as a priest and instructed him to find a different “benevolent bishop,” while permitting Lukac to live with Dopek until he found other arrangements.

On August 12, 1963, Dopek wrote to inform Connare that Lukac was serving within his parish. That same day, Lukac dispatched a letter to Connare asking that Connare petition Rome for the return of his capacity to hear confessions. In October 1963, Connare granted Lukac's request and petitioned the Vatican for a full restoration of priestly faculties on behalf of Lukac.

Connare noted his success in returning Lukac's ability to hear confession in a January 9, 1964, letter to the Bishop of Toledo, George Rehring. At that time, Connare was still working to place Lukac in ministry in another diocese. Connare stated the following to Bishop Rehring: “This past fall, however, while in Rome, I reviewed the details of his case with the Holy Office, and obtained these faculties for Father Lukac. Their use is contingent upon his getting a benevolent bishop, and limited, for the present, to one year.” Diocesan records showed that Connare and Lukac continued to write to various bishops asking that he be accepted into ministry within their respective dioceses.

On January 10, 1964, Joseph Hodges, the Bishop of Wheeling, West Virginia, wrote a letter to Connare stating that Lukac “is most welcome here, that I know something of his background,

and we will be happy to cooperate in helping him serve as a real priest.” Connare responded by thanking Bishop Hodges, noting that “obviously he [Lukac] is a risk... but who can pre-judge the workings of divine grace.” Connare then reminded Hodges about his reservations regarding “assignment in the northern end of the Diocese,” since such a placement may be too close to the Diocese of Greensburg.

January 16, 1964

Most Rev. Joseph H. Hodges, D.D.
Bishop of Wheeling
Bishop's Residence
14 Thirteenth Street
Wheeling, West Virginia

Dear Bishop Hodges,

I am deeply grateful to you for your willingness to give Father Raymond Lukac a chance. Obviously he is a risk, as I indicated in my previous letter; but, who can pre-judge the workings of divine grace?

I have seen Father Lukac on his way to his assignment. I have carefully gone over the past with him, as I know it, and especially his difficulties in Gary. I hope that he has learned from experience, and that in the opportunity you have so graciously given him he will prove himself to be the priest I think he truly wants to be.

I note that you remembered my reservations about an assignment in the northern end of the Diocese. His appointments, while he was with us, included a place deep in Fayette County, relatively near the Morgantown area.

For your file I am enclosing a copy of the latest rescript covering Father Lukac's case. You will note the grant of confession privileges on an "ad experimentum" basis for one year. Needless to say I will be delighted to petition the Holy Office for a review of the matter upon your request and advice as the expiration date approaches.

I It was good to see you, and to speak with you in Philadelphia last week. May your fondest dreams for 1964 be fully realized.

With all the best for you, Dear Bishop Hodges, I am

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Bishop of Greensburg

DG0022872

Bishop Connare's Letter to Bishop Hodges

On August 1, 1964, soon after Lukac joined the Wheeling Diocese, Hodges wrote to Connare informing him “He [Lukac] was rather strong in his language in a talk to some of the high school students earlier this year.” Hodges wrote that he did not want to lose Lukac, but felt it might be better for him to be moved and that such a change would be preferable before “classes” resumed.

Subsequently, Lukac was assigned a position as a part-time chaplain for the Veterans Administration Service, a position in which he served for two years. In 1967, Lukac requested permission to take a full time chaplaincy in the Veterans Administration Service.

In 1993, the Diocese of Greensburg was contacted by an individual claiming to be the daughter of Lukac. This individual wanted to make contact with him and stated in her letter to the Diocese that she thought he had remarried. The Diocese contacted the Archdiocese for Military Services for assistance, but they claimed to have no record of Lukac.

In August 2006, the Archdiocese of Chicago requested information regarding Lukac from the Diocese of Greensburg because they had received a complaint that Lukac had sexually abused a minor while residing in the Chicago Archdiocese (Victim Three). Victim Three stated that, in approximately 1962 to 1964, Lukac abused her when she was around 11 years old in the St. Stanislaus rectory. Lukac was at St. Stanislaus between 1963 and 1964. Victim Three reported that she felt good when Lukac paid attention to her because she was always picked on and that her contact with Lukac ended when he left for the Navy.

On April 11, 2012, Kelly Venegas, the Bishop’s Delegate for the Diocese of Gary, Indiana, called to speak with Father Lawrence Persico of the Diocese of Greenberg regarding an allegation of sexual misconduct involving Lukac alleged to have occurred while Lukac was serving in the

Diocese of Gary. The only note appearing in Lukac's Diocesan file regarding this matter stated the following: "Woman approx. 1961 – 1964 teenage sex relation" (Victim Four).

The Grand Jury finds that the Diocese of Greensburg was aware from the outset of Father Lukac's ordination that he posed a serious risk of sexual misconduct to minor females. Despite this known risk, the Diocese failed to properly address the serious complaints against him and thereafter enabled his sexual misconduct. After being confronted by parishioners of the Diocese with Lukac's abusive acts, Connare doggedly sought to keep him active in his ministry and persisted in his efforts to have Lukac assigned to another diocese and have his priestly faculties fully restored. These assignments included Catholic high schools, where Lukac would be in regular contact with teenage girls, to whom he posed a known, immediate threat. The Grand Jury finds that the bishops who collaborated to keep Lukac active in the priesthood did so knowing he posed a risk to the public and were, therefore, complicit in the abuse he committed.