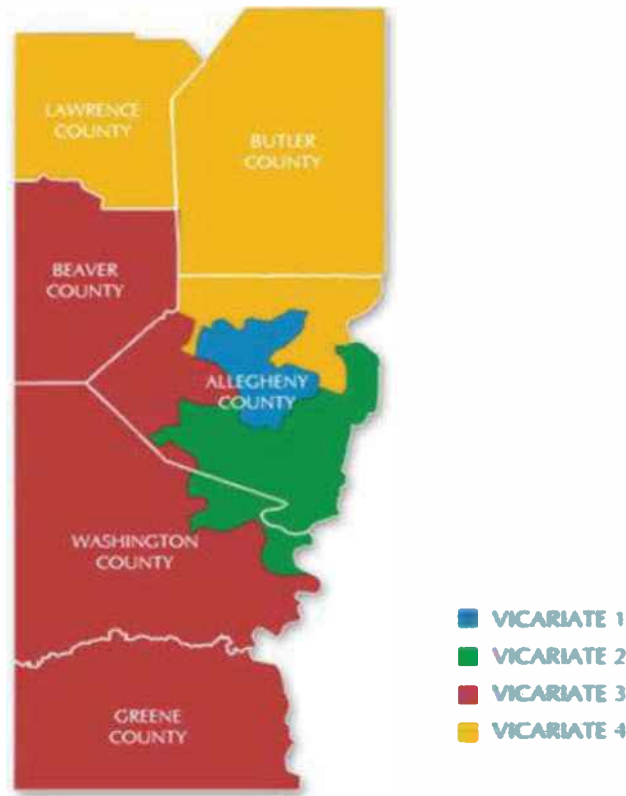


# Roman Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh



## I. General Overview of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The Diocese of Pittsburgh was canonically erected on August 11, 1843, by Pope Gregory XVI. This Diocese covers Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Greene, Lawrence and Washington counties. As of 2017, the population of Catholics living within the Diocese of Pittsburgh was 632,138, which constitutes approximately 33% of the total population in the geographic region. There are approximately 211 Diocesan priests in active ministry, and a total of 188 parishes. The Diocese of Pittsburgh is also comprised of four regional vicariates, which includes parishes, schools and Catholic institutions. Each regional vicariate is led by a full-

time regional vicar to assist the bishop in carrying out his responsibilities, and is a representative of the bishop in his given region.<sup>4</sup>

**Vicariate 1** is currently led by Vicar General William Waltersheid. This region is composed of 43 parishes and 21 elementary and high schools in the city neighborhoods and some east and north suburbs of Pittsburgh.

**Vicariate 2** is currently led by Regional Vicar Frederick Cain. This region is composed of 56 parishes and 17 elementary and high schools in some east and north suburbs of Pittsburgh and northeast Washington County areas.

**Vicariate 3** is currently led by Regional Vicar Howard Campbell. This region is composed of 39 parishes and 12 elementary and high schools in the west suburbs of Pittsburgh, Beaver, and Greene counties and west and southeast Washington County areas.

**Vicariate 4** is currently led by Regional Vicar Philip Farrell. This region is composed of 50 parishes and 14 elementary and high schools in the north suburbs of Pittsburgh, Butler and Lawrence Counties.

## **II. History of Bishops of the Diocese of Pittsburgh**

- a) Bishop Hugh C. Boyle (6/16/1921 through 2/22/1950)
- b) John Cardinal Dearden (12/22/1950 through 12/18/1958)
- c) John Cardinal Wright (1/23/1959 through 4/28/1969)
- d) Bishop Vincent M. Leonard (6/1/1969 through 6/30/1983)
- e) Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua (10/10/1983 through 02/10/1988)

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<sup>4</sup> As of April 2018, the Diocese of Pittsburgh is implementing a plan to reorganize the regional vicariates.

f) Donald Cardinal Wuerl (2/12/1988 through 5/15/2006)

g) Bishop David Zubik (Appointed September 28, 2007)

### **III. Additional Church Leadership within the Diocese of Pittsburgh Relevant to the Grand Jury's Investigation**

The following Church leaders, while not bishops, played an important role in the Diocese of Pittsburgh's handling of child sexual abuse complaints.

- 1) Father Robert Guay, Secretary for Clergy and Pastoral Life
- 2) Father Anthony Bosco, Chancellor of the Diocese of Pittsburgh
- 3) Rita Flaherty, Diocesan Assistance Coordinator
- 4) Father Ronald Lengwin
- 5) Father James Young

### **IV. Findings of the Grand Jury**

The Grand Jury uncovered evidence of sexual abuse of minors committed by dozens of priests and, in one case, an aspiring priest, in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. This sexual abuse included grooming and fondling of genitals and/or intimate body parts, as well as penetration of the vagina, mouth, or anus. The evidence also showed that Diocesan administrators, including the bishops, had knowledge of this conduct yet regularly placed the priests in ministry after the Diocese was on notice that a complaint of child sexual abuse had been made. This conduct was enabling to the offenders and endangered the welfare of children.

The evidence demonstrated that the Diocese had discussions with lawyers regarding the sexual conduct of priests with children and made settlements with the victims. These settlements



contained confidentiality agreements forbidding victims from speaking out about their abuse under threat of some penalty, such as legal action to recover previously paid settlement monies.


Finally, the Grand Jury received evidence that several Diocesan administrators, including the bishops, often dissuaded victims from reporting to police or conducted their own deficient, biased investigation without reporting crimes against children to the proper authorities.

## **V. Offenders Identified by the Grand Jury**

- 1) [REDACTED]
- 2) James R. Adams
- 3) James L. Armstrong
- 4) John M. Bauer
- 5) John E. Brueckner
- 6) Leo Burchianti
- 7) Robert Castelucci
- 8) Mauro James Cautela
- 9) Charles J. Chatt
- 10) Anthony J. Cipolla
- 11) John P. Connor
- 12) John David Crowley
- 13) Richard Deakin
- 14) Ferdinand B. Demsher
- 15) Myles Eric Diskin
- 16) Richard J. Dorsch
- 17) David F. Dzermejko

- 18) [REDACTED]
- 19) John P. Fitzgerald
- 20) Joseph M. Ganter
- 21) John A. Genizer
- 22) Charles R. Ginder
- 23) James G. Graham
- 24) William Hildebrand
- 25) John S. Hoehl
- 26) James Hopkins
- 27) John J. Huber
- 28) Edward G. Huff
- 29) Edward Joyce
- 30) Marvin Justi
- 31) Bernard J. Kaczmarczyk
- 32) Joseph D. Karabin
- 33) John Keegan
- 34) [REDACTED]
- 35) Henry Krawczyk
- 36) [REDACTED]
- 37) Edward L. Kryston
- 38) Anujit Kumar
- 39) George Kurutz
- 40) Fidelis Lazar

- 41) Richard Lelonis
- 42) Albert Leonard
- 43) Casimir F. Lewandowski
- 44) John P. Maloney
- 45) Julius May
- 46) Dominic McGee
- 47) Donald W. McIlvane
- 48) Thomas McKenna
- 49) Albert McMahan
- 50) John H. McMahan
- 51) Frank Meder
- 52) 
- 53) Arthur R. Merrell
- 54) 
- 55) Joseph Mueller
- 56) Lawrence O'Connell
- 57) Thomas M. O'Donnell
- 58) William P. O'Malley, III
- 59) Ernest Paone
- 60) George Parme
- 61) Paul E. Pindel
- 62) Pittsburgh Priest #1
- 63) Francis Pucci

- 64) John W. Rebel
- 65) Raymond R. Rhoden
- 66) Carl Roemele
- 67) Michael C. Romero
- 68) Oswald E. Romero
- 69) David Scharf
- 70) Richard Scherer
- 71) Raymond T. Schultz
- 72) Francis Siler
- 73) Rudolph M. Silvers
- 74) Edward P. Smith
- 75) James E. Somma
- 76) Bartley A. Sorensen
- 77) Robert E. Spangenberg
- 78) Paul G. Spisak
- 79) Lawrence F. Stebler
- 80) Richard Gerard Terdine
- 81) 
- 82) Charles Thomas
- 83) John William Wellinger
- 84) Joseph S. Wichmanowski
- 85) George A. Wilt
- 86) Robert G. Wolk

87) William B. Yockey

88) Theodore P. Zabowski

89) George Zirwas

90) Richard Zula

91-99) Pittsburgh Priests #2-10

**V. Examples of Institutional Failure: Fathers Ernest Paone, George Zirwas and Richard Zula**

The Grand Jury notes the following examples of child sexual abuse perpetrated by priests within the Diocese of Pittsburgh. These examples further highlight the wholesale institutional failure that endangered the welfare of children throughout the Pennsylvania Dioceses including the Diocese of Pittsburgh. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive; rather, they provide a window into the conduct of past Pennsylvania Bishops and the crimes they permitted to occur on their watch. In the Diocese of Pittsburgh, the acts of Ernest Paone, George Zirwas, and Richard Zula speak for themselves.



## **The Case of Father Ernest Paone**

### **Known Assignments**

06/1957 - 12/1960	St. Titus, Aliquippa
12/1960 - 05/1961	Epiphany, Uptown
05/1961 - 10/1961	Mother of Sorrows, McKees Rocks
10/1961 - 05/1962	St. Monica, Wampum/ St. Theresa, Koppel
05/1962 - 05/1966	Madonna of Jerusalem, Sharpsburg
05/1966 - 02/2001	Leave of Absence/ Health Reasons
09/1966 - 02/2001	Ministry in Los Angeles & San Diego, California and Las Vegas, Nevada
02/19/2001	Retired from Active Ministry

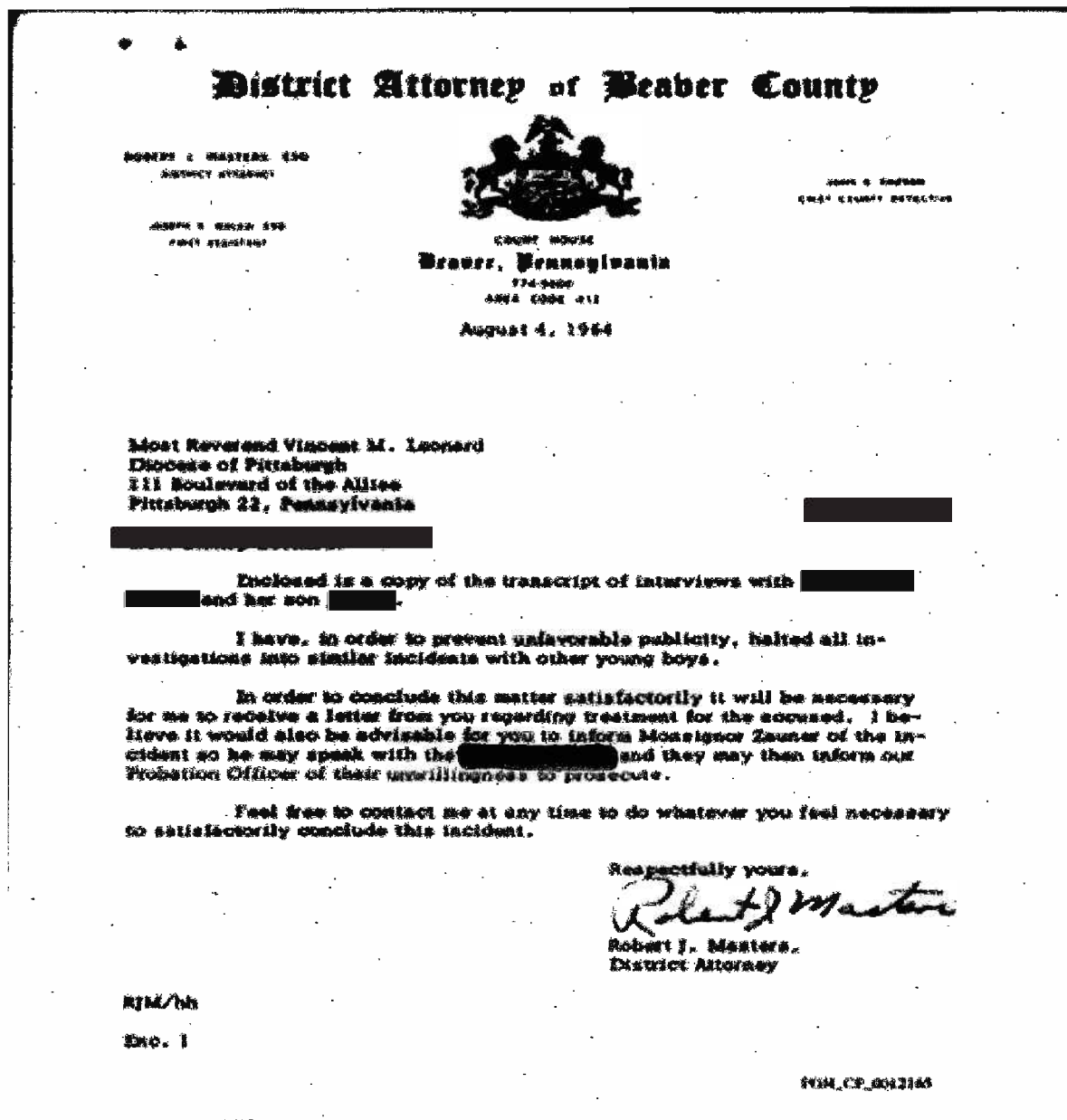
Father Ernest Paone was ordained in 1957 and was assigned to five separate parishes within the first nine years of his ministry.

On May 1, 1962, Father Edmund Sheedy, the Pastor of St. Monica where Paone was serving as Parochial Vicar, notified Bishop John Wright that he had interceded to prevent Paone from being arrested for “molesting young boys of the parish and the illegal use of guns with even younger parishioners.” Sheedy advised Wright that Paone was involved in “conduct degrading to the priesthood” and “scandalous to the parishioners.” In response, the Diocese reassigned Paone to Madonna of Jerusalem, in Sharpsburg.

On August 4, 1964, Robert Masters, the District Attorney of Beaver County, sent a letter to Bishop Vincent Leonard of the Diocese of Pittsburgh with respect to a sexual abuse investigation of Paone. The District Attorney advised the Diocese that “in order to prevent unfavorable publicity,” he had “halted all investigations into similar incidents involving young boys.” No further action was taken against Paone.

On September 15, 2017, Masters testified before the Grand Jury. Masters was confronted with his letter which the Grand Jury obtained from Diocesan files. When asked by the attorney for the Commonwealth why he would defer to the Bishop on a criminal matter, Master replied,

“Probably respect for the Bishop. I really have no proper answer.” Masters also admitted he was desirous of support from the Diocese for his political career.



The District Attorney's Letter to Bishop Leonard

For approximately one year, Paone was without a clear assignment within the Diocese. On May 20, 1966, Wright granted Paone an indefinite leave of absence “for reasons bound up with your psychological and physical health as well as spiritual well-being.” Following this leave of absence, Paone relocated to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. In 1967, he relocated again to the Diocese of San Diego.

Paone’s home Diocese remained the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The ability to remove Paone from ministry or permit him to continue in ministry resided in the Bishop of Pittsburgh. In the subsequent years, Paone would require continued authorization from the Diocese of Pittsburgh to remain in active ministry among the Catholic faithful and their children. This was demonstrated in documents obtained by the Grand Jury from the secret or confidential archives of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

On August 14, 1968, Paone requested that the Diocese recommend him for faculties within the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Paone indicated that he had spoken with Wright and had obtained his approval. On August 27, 1968, the Diocese complied with this request by letter. Father Anthony Bosco, Chancellor of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, wrote Monsignor Benjamin Hawkes of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and informed him that Paone was living in California with the knowledge and approval of Wright. Bosco stated, “There would, therefore, be no objection to Father being granted the faculties of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.”

3630-29 Vista Campana S.  
Oceanside, Ca. 92054  
August 14, 1968

Dear Father:

In order to satisfy certain requirements of the Los Angeles Chancery regarding occasional Sunday "helpouts", I have been directed to obtain a letter from you which indicates that 1) you are aware that I am residing here with my brother, and 2) that you recommend me for the faculties of this Archdiocese. During our several meetings, Bishop Wright indicated to me that he approves of both points and had offered to arrange a meeting between Cardinal McIntyre and myself. At the time, I mentioned that I felt that such a meeting would not be necessary. I would appreciate it if you would send the letter to me personally or to Monsignor Benjamin G. Hawkes --1530 West Ninth Street--Los Angeles 90015 California.

Thanking you in advance for your kind cooperation and with every good wish, I am,

Sincerely,



Father E. Paone

PGH\_CF\_0012160

Paone Requests a Letter of Good Standing

August 27, 1968

Dear Monsignor Hawkes:

Father Ernest Paone has written this office with a request that I inform you of his status with the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Father Paone is on a legitimate leave of absence from the Diocese of Pittsburgh and is residing in California with the knowledge and approval of Bishop Wright. There would, therefore, be no objections to Father being granted the faculties of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

(Rt. Rev. Msgr.) Anthony G. Bosco  
Chancellor

Rt. Rev. Msgr. Benjamin G. Hawkes  
1530 West Ninth Street  
Los Angeles, California 90015

mjb

PGH\_CF\_0012159

Again in 1975, a similar request was made for a letter of good standing. On March 3, 1975, the Diocese complied. Bosco provided a letter “to certify that the Reverend Ernest C. Paone is a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh on leave of absence, but in good standing. He has permission of his Ordinary to offer Mass.”

During the decades between Paone’s departure from Pennsylvania in 1966 and 1991, Paone served as pastor of a parish in Diamond Bar, California.<sup>5</sup> Paone reported to the Diocese that his service included hearing “many confessions in that parish.” Paone also served in two parishes in the Diocese of San Diego. Paone taught in public schools, and attended at least one course at Catholic University in San Diego, while maintaining all priestly faculties through the Diocese of Pittsburgh. There is no indication that the Diocese provided any interested parties information that Paone had sexually abused children or that the Diocese had played a role in preventing his prosecution for that conduct.

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<sup>5</sup> Diocesan records note that during this time Paone was “supplying assistance on Sundays and Holy Days in a parish for 21 years.”

March 3, 1975

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

This is to certify that the Reverend Ernest C. Paone is a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh on leave of absence, but in good standing. He has the permission of his Ordinary to offer Mass.

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ Most Reverend Anthony G. Bosco  
Vicar General - Chancellor  
Auxiliary Bishop of Pittsburgh

lac

PGH\_CF\_0012156

Another Letter of Good Standing From the Diocese

As Paone continued in ministry, he did so with approval from the Diocese in spite of the Diocese's knowledge that Paone was a child molester. The aforementioned period of time encompassed the entire tenure of Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua from October 1983 to February 1988. Diocesan records, obtained by the Grand Jury, show the least amount of internal correspondence regarding Paone during that time. The Grand Jury concluded that Bevilacqua left Paone to his ministries and provided little to no oversight. While the lack of meaningful supervision is consistent with the conduct of other Bishops of Pittsburgh and detailed herein, a relevant observation specific to Bevilacqua himself is the apparent lack of documentation of any of Paone's activities in contrast to the internal documentation executed by the other Bishops.

On June 30, 1989, Bishop Donald Wuerl sent a letter to the Vatican with respect to several diocesan priests who had recently been accused of sexually abusing children and whose cases had generated significant publicity. In the letter, Wuerl documented his diocesan policies for sexual abuse and stated his responsibility as Bishop was to determine the course of action in these cases. Wuerl wrote that Catholic parishioners had a right to know whether a priest accused of such crimes had been reassigned to their parish. Further, Wuerl advised that due to the scandal caused by these priests, he initiated a review of any previous cases of diocesan priests who had been accused of "pedophilic activities" with minors.

Wuerl warned the Vatican that Catholic bishops and dioceses could become liable once they are made aware of sexual abuse complaints and that priests who deny the "crime" of pedophilic activity with minors is "common in pedophiles" and that pedophilia is "incurable." Wuerl noted his exclusive role and stated that the "unassignability" of a priest must rest solely with the bishop due to the potential victims' parents "who have a moral right to expect chaste



conduct from the priest” and the parishioners who “would be gravely unsettled and scandalized in the knowledge that a priest pedophile has been assigned in their midst.”

However, despite Wuerl’s summary of the serious and criminal nature of the problem to the Vatican, Diocesan records revealed that Wuerl granted Paone’s request to be reassigned again on October 22, 1991. This time, Paone was permitted to transfer to the Diocese of Reno – Las Vegas to serve as the Parochial Vicar at a local parish. Wuerl wrote that he had been updated on Paone’s recent meeting with Father Robert Guay, Secretary for Clergy and Pastoral Life, and Father David Zubik, Director of the Office of Clergy. Wuerl noted that Paone has most recently served on a high school faculty in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. Wuerl’s continued approval permitted Paone to enjoy all the faculties of the Diocese. On November 20, 1991, Zubik wrote to Paone to confirm that Wuerl had approved his new assignment.



COPY

DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

111 BOULEVARD OF ALLIES  
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA 15222-1698  
(412) 456-3010  
FAX: (412) 456-3185

September 6, 1991

Dear Father Paone:

Your letter of August 16, 1991 arrived and with it your request for permission to exercise priestly ministry in the Diocese of Reno, Nevada. For the past twenty-five years, you have been offering priestly service to the faithful of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles with the permission granted you at that time by Bishop John J. Wright. I am grateful for your sharing this request with me.

To assure that every consideration is given to your request, I have given your letter to the Priest Personnel Board for our review at a future meeting. After I have received the observations and recommendations from the Board, I will be in a better position to respond to you.

Grateful for your ministry and with every best wish, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

Bishop of Pittsburgh

Reverend Ernest C. Paone  
Faculty - Oceanside, CA  
234 Vista Montana Way  
Ocean Side, CA 92054

PGH\_CF\_0012152

Bishop Wuerl Receives Paone's Request to Transfer

In March, 1992, Paone took a leave of absence from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles for “reasons of health.” On July 25, 1994, the Diocese of Pittsburgh received another complaint of child sexual abuse committed by Paone in the 1960’s. The victim’s sister came forward and reported that after becoming aware of the abuse, her father “went to the rectory with a shotgun and told Father Paone that he better leave town.” The Diocese sent him to St. Luke’s Institute for an evaluation.

In a confidential letter sent to St. Luke’s, the Diocese acknowledged that Paone had been teaching seventh and eighth grade students in the Diocese of San Diego for 19 years. Further, in another confidential memorandum sent from Zubik to Wuerl, Paone’s various assignments and sexual abuse complaints were again listed in detail. The Grand Jury noted that this process showed no concern for public safety or the victims of child sexual abuse. The handling of these matters was commonplace. In spite of the complaint, Paone continued in active ministry following his brief evaluation at a church-based treatment facility.

The Grand Jury discovered that this 1994 complaint resulted in the generation of Diocesan records that noted an even greater extent of knowledge regarding Paone’s sexual conduct with children. An August 5, 1994 confidential memorandum sent from Zubik to Wuerl advised him of this new complaint against Paone and that due to this complaint, his file was reviewed “with great care.” Among other things, Zubik advised Wuerl that questions about Paone’s emotional and physical health were raised as early as the 1950’s, while he was still in seminary. Zubik further advised of Paone’s various assignments and correspondence over the years, before also describing the multiple records documenting the Diocese’s knowledge of his sexual abuse of children as early as 1962. Zubik then noted that with respect to these latter records, “You should know that these last three pieces of correspondence were placed in the confidential files.”

Wuerl responded by dispatching letters notifying the relevant California and Nevada Dioceses of the 1994 complaint. However, Wuerl did not report the more detailed information contained within Diocesan records. The Diocese did not recall Paone; nor did it suspend his faculties as a priest. To the contrary, Paone continued to have the support of the Diocese. On July 29, 1996, Wuerl was informed by the Chancellor of the Diocese of San Diego that Paone had continued with his ministry, but, “acting on the advice of our insurance carrier,” he was requesting that Wuerl complete the enclosed affidavit, which stated, among other things, that Paone has “not had any problems involving sexual abuse, any history of sexual involvement with minors or others, or any other inappropriate sexual behavior.”



Office of the Chancellor

July 25, 1996

JUL 29 1996

BISHOP'S OFFICE

Most Rev. Donald W. Wuerl  
111 Boulevard of the Allies  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Your Excellency:

Father Ernest Pearce, a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, is providing priestly ministry in the Diocese of San Diego at this time. Acting on the advice of our insurance carrier, we are reviewing our personnel files of diocesan and religious order priests working in our diocese and seeking the information requested on the enclosed affidavit. This request is in no way meant to indicate that there has been in the past, or exists in the present, any reason to question the behavior of Father Ernest Pearce.

I would be grateful if you would complete the form and return it to this office at your convenience.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. Daniel J. Dillsbough, STD, JCL  
Chancellor

DJD:rs  
Enclosure

KORLAT, JPC3136

On August 12, 1996, Wuerl directed Father Kozar, Secretary for Clergy and Religious, to respond to the request. Kozar then sent a confidential letter to the Diocese of San Diego and advised, among other things, that:

Father Paone has not had an assignment in this diocese for over thirty years. Thus, the only appropriate information about him has already been communicated to you in a letter from Father Robert Guay, Secretary for Clergy and Religious, dated January 30, 1996.

Paone again continued in ministry.

On January 6, 2002, an article which detailed the Catholic Church's practice of reassigning priests accused of sexual abuse of children was published in the *Boston Globe* newspaper. In response, a letter was dispatched in May 2002, by Father James Young, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Religious, to Father Michael Murphy of the Diocese of San Diego, advising him that due to the "recent difficulties in the Church and having raised the bar on allegations brought against our priests," the Diocese of Pittsburgh was removing the faculties of Paone and placing him on administrative leave. The Grand Jury noted that only this external force generated the action which should have occurred decades earlier.

In June, 2002, another victim advised the Diocese of Pittsburgh that he was sexually abused by Paone in the 1960's. The abuse included fondling, oral sex, and anal sex. It occurred at the victim's house, at a hunting camp to which Paone had access to in the woods, and, in Paone's car. Paone also provided the victim with alcohol, pornographic magazines, and cash. In July, the Diocese notified Paone about this new complaint. Then, on July 9, 2002, the Diocese of Pittsburgh notified the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office of "inappropriate touching that occurred around 1962-63 when the alleged victim was age 15. Incidents occurred in a cabin owned by Father Paone but alleged victim does not know where it was located." It does not appear any information

regarding Paone's history was provided to the District Attorney and this notice was sent long after the statute of limitations had expired.

In February, 2003, Wuerl accepted Paone's resignation from ministry. Wuerl wrote a letter acknowledging Paone's request while providing assurance that "sustenance needs and benefits will continue according to the norms of law." Approximately 41 years after the Diocese learned that Paone was sexually assaulting children, he was finally retired from active ministry. In spite of Wuerl's statements to the Vatican, the clear and present threat that Paone posed to children was hidden and kept secret from parishioners in three states. Wuerl's statements had been meaningless without any action.

Three years after Paone's retirement, the Diocese received an update. A February 2006 confidential memorandum from Father John Rushofsky, Clergy Personnel, was obtained by the Grand Jury and revealed that Paone had been "assisting with confessions for confirmation-age children, apparently asking inappropriate questions of the young penitents." When questioned about this, Paone told local Diocesan officials that he had received permission from the Diocese. The Diocese dispatched a letter to Paone to remind him that his faculties had been revoked.

On May 10, 2012, Paone died.

## **The Case of Father George Zirwas**

### **Known Assignments**

10/1979 - 05/18/1980	Resurrection, Brookline
05/1980 - 04/1981	St. Adalbert, South Side
04/1981 - 02/1982	St. Joseph the Worker, New Castle
02/1982 - 06/1989	St. Michael, Elizabeth
06/1989 - 12/1991	St. Bartholomew, Penn Hills
12/1991 - 05/1994	St. Scholastica, Aspinwall
05/1994 - 12/1994	St. Joseph, Verona
12/1994 - 07/1995	Leave of Absence, Personal Reasons
07/1995 - 11/2/1995	St. Maurice, Forest Hills
11/1995 - 05/2001	Leave of Absence, Personal Reasons

Father George Zirwas was ordained in September 1979. Zirwas was assigned to eight different parishes as Parochial Vicar until 1995 when he was placed on a leave of absence. He appeared to have remained in this status until his death in May 2001.

On September 1, 2016, the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General served the Diocese of Pittsburgh with a Grand Jury subpoena requesting any and all documents related to clergy members or diocesan leadership personnel who had been accused of sexually abusing children. In response, the Diocese produced thousands of documents. In the course of this investigation, the Grand Jury took testimony from live witnesses, reviewed Diocesan records, and consulted with experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the field of behavioral analysis. However, the Grand Jury learned that some original documents related to deceased priests were intentionally destroyed by the Diocese. Fortunately, Canon 489 of the Canon Law governing the operations of the Roman Catholic Church requires the maintenance of a summary of the facts and any text of a definitive judgement. In the case of Zirwas, while many original records were destroyed, the



summary of meetings, memoranda, and Diocesan actions remained.<sup>6</sup> The Grand Jury learned that the Diocese was aware of complaints against Zirwas for sexually abusing children as early as 1987. Additional complaints were received between 1987 and 1995. However, Zirwas continued to function as a priest during this period and was reassigned to several parishes.

Documents obtained by the Grand Jury from the secret or confidential files of the Diocese recorded that in October, 1987, Father Garbin met with a little boy and his family about an “incident of inappropriate touch” by Zirwas at St. Joseph the Worker parish. No action was taken by Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua, nor the Diocese, and Zirwas remained in ministry.

In February, 1988, another internal memorandum recorded that Father Ted Rutkowski met with Zirwas. The meeting was arranged after Zirwas was accused of unwanted sexual contact with a young man. Zirwas admitted to having contact with the young man in multiple parish rectories and explained that the young man had asked Zirwas to massage his legs. Zirwas stated that he massaged his legs, but did nothing more. He noted that sometime after the contact, the “boy left, then the allegation came.” Zirwas was thereafter sent to St. Francis Hospital for an evaluation in March, 1988. Upon his release, he continued in ministry.

In November, 1988, Diocesan officials met with a mother who reported that her 16-year-old son was given alcohol by Zirwas and that Zirwas fondled the boy’s genitals. That same month, the Diocese received another report from a victim who revealed that he was groped by Zirwas when he was 17 years old. Zirwas was sent to St. Luke’s Institute for an evaluation in December, 1988. Upon his release he once again continued in ministry.

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<sup>6</sup> The Grand Jury notes that where any institution or individual destroys evidence of a crime when an investigation is about to be instituted, such conduct could be pursued as a criminal offense in Pennsylvania under 18 Pa. C.S.A. §4910, Tampering with or Fabricating Physical Evidence.

Internal assignment records documented that from January, 1989 until June, 1989 Zirwas served as Parochial Vicar of St. Michael. From June, 1989 to December, 1991, he served at St. Bartholomew as Parochial Vicar. In June, 1991, a meeting was held between Father David Zubick, Father Downs, and Father Robert Guay with respect to a victim's complaint regarding his contact with Zirwas. Among other things, this victim reported that Zirwas massaged his feet, calves, thighs, and then groped his penis. The victim informed the Diocese that he was too embarrassed to speak publically regarding the abuse or go to court.

In December, 1991, Zirwas was reassigned to St. Scholastica as Parochial Vicar. Then, in May, 1994, Zirwas was again reassigned to St. Joseph as Parochial Vicar. Diocesan records, obtained by the Grand Jury, revealed that Zirwas was then placed on a leave of absence for "personal reasons" in December, 1994.

In July, 1995, Zirwas met with Zubik and requested permission to take an assignment in Miami, Florida. Zirwas stated that his desire to leave the Diocese was due to "false rumors about him." Zirwas threatened to pursue legal action against other Diocesan personnel for "raising the consciousness of some of the people at St. Joseph Parish concerning his relationship to the public scandals which surfaced in 1988." This meeting was memorialized in a confidential internal memorandum obtained by the Grand Jury.

Within days, Zirwas was returned to ministry by Bishop Donald Wuerl. In 1995, Zirwas was assigned as Parochial Vicar of St. Maurice. In November, 1995, the Diocese received another complaint from a victim who reported that Zirwas fondled him and performed oral sex on him when he was approximately 15 years old. In response, Zirwas was again placed on a leave of absence for "personal reasons." A status he would keep until the time of his death.

In January, 1996, a mother of a victim demanded a meeting with the Diocese. That meeting was granted. Diocesan records noted the mother's outrage and disappointment. She stated that she had originally reported her son's abuse in 1988 and believed that proper action would be taken to remove Zirwas from ministry. However, she learned that this did not occur. She noted that she had written at least one letter and received no response. Moreover, when she pursued the matter, she was told by Father Ted Rutkowski that it was "a one-time occurrence and that it had been handled."

After being placed on a leave of absence in 1995, Zirwas relocated to Florida before ultimately moving to Cuba. Zirwas's activities in Florida and Cuba are largely unknown and no detailed Diocesan records were provided to the Grand Jury. However, in 1996, Zirwas informed the Diocese that he had knowledge of other Pittsburgh Diocese priests' involvement in illegal sexual activity. In exchange for this information, he demanded that his sustenance payments be increased.

In response to this request, Wuerl instructed him to document in writing the names of the priests involved, or, state that he had no knowledge of what he had previously claimed. Wuerl advised that this action had to be undertaken before Zirwas could receive any additional assistance. After Zirwas disavowed any knowledge of priest involvement in illegal sexual activity in a letter to the Diocese, he was granted an additional financial stipend and his sustenance payments were continued. Zirwas continued to work with the poor and needy in Cuba until May 2001, when he was murdered inside his Havana apartment.

During the course of this investigation, the Grand Jury uncovered a ring of predatory priests operating within the Diocese who shared intelligence or information regarding victims as well as exchanging the victims amongst themselves. This ring also manufactured child pornography on

Diocesan property, including parishes and rectories. This group included: Zirwas, Francis Pucci, Robert Wolk, and Richard Zula. This group of priests used whips, violence and sadism in raping their victims.

On December 17, 2017, a victim (hereinafter identified as “George”) appeared before the Grand Jury to provide information regarding his sexual abuse as a child by priests in the Diocese. George’s experience is not only a personal tragedy but an institutional tragedy. His testimony corroborated evidence found within Diocesan records that predatory priests existed; that these predators shared information; and, that these men sexually offended on children.

George was raised as a Catholic and attended Catholic School from first through twelfth grade. While at St. Adalbert’s on the South Side of Pittsburgh, George served as an altar boy.

George became friends with Zirwas in the mid-1970’s. Zirwas would spend time at George’s home and take George to lunch or dinner on occasion. George’s family encouraged the contact with Zirwas based upon the belief that Zirwas would be a good influence on George. George noted that that his Catholic family looked at priests as “very truth worthy, very elevated.” As George was transitioning from middle school to high school, Zirwas took him on trips, took him to see St. Paul Seminary, and, even taught him how to drive. Over time, Zirwas began to take George with him as he carried out priestly duties and on his visits with parishioners.

Zirwas started introducing George to his “friends” who were priests who seemed to share similar interests. On one occasion, Zirwas took George to a parish rectory in Munhall where the following priests were present: Father Francis L. Pucci, Father Richard Zula, and Father Francis Luddy of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. The priests began a conversation about religious statues and asked George to get up on a bed. As the priests watched, they asked George to remove his shirt. They then drew an analogy to the image of Christ on the cross, and told George to remove

his pants so that his pose would be more consistent with the image of Christ in a loincloth. At that point, the priests began taking Polaroid pictures of George. As the picture taking continued, the priests directed George to take off his underwear. George was nervous and complied.

George recalled that either Zula or Pucci operated the camera. He stated that all of the men giggled and stated that the pictures would be used as a reference for new religious statues for the parishes. George testified that this occurred before he turned 18-years-old and that his genitals were exposed in the photographs. George stated that his photographs were added to a collection of similar photographs depicting other teenage boys.

George recalled that each of these priests had a group of favored boys who they would take on trips. The boys received gifts; specifically, gold cross necklaces. George stated, “He [Zirwas] had told me that they, the priests, would give their boys, their altar boys or their favorite boys these crosses. So he gave me a big gold cross to wear.” The Grand Jury observed that these crosses served another purpose beyond the grooming of the victims: They were a visible designation that these children were victims of sexual abuse. They were a signal to other predators that the children had been desensitized to sexual abuse and were optimal targets for further victimization.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> George still has the cross and it was shown to the Grand Jury.



The Cross that Zirwas Gave to Altar Boys

The Grand Jury noted that George's testimony revealed how a group of priests, all offenders in their own right, collaborated together to manufacture child pornography within the

Diocese of Pittsburgh. George's last contact with Zirwas occurred prior to his departure to join the United States military. However, other boys became victims of abuse.

In 1988, the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office charged Zula, Pucci and Wolk with sexually assaulting two altar boys. Zula pled guilty and was sentenced to up to five years in prison. Wolk was sentenced to up to ten years in prison. Pucci's charges were dropped because the criminal statute of limitations had expired.

Zula was a pastor at Saints Mary and Ann Church in Marianna. Wolk had been a pastor of St. Thomas Church in Bethel Park.

George testified that he looks back now with disdain. He questions how this activity could occur, involve multiple priests, and not have created suspicion on the part of Diocesan administrators. George stated,

To me, between going to St. Paul Seminary, Father Zula, Father Pucci, that there was just an insidious pedophile community that permeated through at least the Pittsburgh Diocese. And you know, my assumption as I grow older is that this was something that was happening all over the United States and it just – you know, it is very disappointing.

George went on to explain his reluctance to come forward, stating,

I don't think there was anybody I could trust to tell, number 1. There was never – who do you tell? Like, at the time, I was a tough kid from the South Side. It didn't like – I just kind of – I was a survivor at the time. So that was just part of the lifestyle, I guess, and you know, I just kind of moved on... as a man, you know, who do you want to tell that other priests took pictures of you. It was pretty degrading. It is humiliating. I know some people it went further than that. I'm lucky it hasn't. It is still really hard to get it out there that you were in a room when you were 14 or 15 and getting naked pictures taken from priests.

George's testimony to the Grand Jury was one of the first times he had ever disclosed his abuse. The Grand Jury's review of records revealed that the Diocese was aware of the conduct of these predatory priests and the records corroborated George's testimony. It does not appear that the Diocese disclosed any information to the police during the prosecution of some of these

offenders in the late 1980's. Moreover, it does not appear that the Diocese shared with the police Zirwas's statement that he had information on other priests' criminal activity.

After Zirwas' death in 2001, the spokesman for the Diocese was interviewed by the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Among other things, the Diocese refused to disclose any of the reasons why Zirwas was placed on a leave of absence, citing the confidentiality of his personnel files. However, when Wuerl presided over Zirwas' funeral, he stated, among other things, that "a priest is a priest. Once he is ordained, he is a priest forever."



## The Case of Father Richard Zula

### Known Assignments

06/1966 – 06/1971	St. Cyril of Alexandria, North Side, Pittsburgh
06/1971 - 12/1973	Most Blessed Sacrament, Natrona Heights
12/1973 - 06/1980	Our Lady of Czestochowa, New Castle
06/1980 - 05/1984	St. Michael Archangel, Munhall
05/1984 - 06/1986	Sisters of St. Mary & Ann, Marianna
06/1986 - 09/1987	St. Clement, Tarentum (Resigned)
09/1987	Leave of Absence (Withdrawn); Zula is admitted to the Institute of Living, Hartford, Connecticut
04/1996	Withdrawn from Ministry

Father Richard Zula was ordained in 1966 and assigned to six different parishes through 1987. In 1987, the Diocese was under the command of Bishop Anthony Bevilacqua. In September of that year, the Diocese received a complaint that Zula had engaged in violent sexual activity with a minor at a rectory. This conduct involved three other adult males who were not priests.

On September 25, 1987, a meeting was held between Zula, Father Ted Rutkowski, Secretary for Clergy and Pastoral Life, and Father Robert Guay. Documentation of the meeting consisted of handwritten notes that included the name of the child victim at the top of the page, followed by three additional names and another notation of the victim's name. Among other things, this document listed "parties at Marianna rectory (assigned May 1984)<sup>8</sup>" "alcohol, marijuana;" "oral sex, attempt anal sex, whips, rectory bedroom, offer to pay private room fee at St. V., present activity." This was followed by the notation, "Institute of Living Tues Sept 29" and the following notes: "No public celebration of mass, No return to parish once out, No communication with [victim] or family, No communication with others involved, Resignation

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<sup>8</sup> 1987 was the year when Zula became pastor at St. Clement.

from parish." Zula was subsequently sent to the Institute of Living, in Hartford, Connecticut on September 29, 1987.

Receiving  
by U.S. Post Office  
9/25/87

9-25-87  
Zula-Grey  
TR

[REDACTED]

- parties at Maryanna rectory (assigned May 1984)
- alcohol, marijuana

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- oral sex attempt and sex
- whips
- rectory bedroom
- offer to pay private room fee at St J
- present activity

St Paul Retreat House  
Institute of Living Tues Sept 29

- No public celebration of Mass
- No return to parish one out
- No communication with Douglas or family
- No communication with others involved
- Resignation from parish

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The Handwritten Notes

On December 9, 1987, Rutkowski documented his thoughts that Zula was a “mama’s boy” who was “pursued” by the victim. He also described the victim as being “16 – 17 years of age.”

A confidential memorandum from Father Farmer to Rutkowski dated December 29, 1987, outlined three proposed scenarios for placing Zula back into ministry. Among other things, these proposals included assigning him as Chaplain at various parishes or assigning him to provide pastoral care at nursing homes.

Zula was discharged on January 13, 1988. The Diocese was advised that Zula again confessed his criminal conduct. He stated, “I got involved in some inappropriate sexual behavior and my bishop has sent me here for an evaluation.” The summary further noted this other “individual” was “very sexually promiscuous and needy.” The Grand Jury’s review of these materials compels the conclusion that the Diocese was prepared to return yet another admitted child molester to ministry. Indeed, notes in Zula’s personnel file indicated that “re Zula” the “sooner reassigned the better.” However, intervening and external factors changed that judgment.

361-2121

Stanko 2-10-88 (re Zula)

- former resigned the better
- sitting around doing nothing not helping
- will see Zula periodically. Doesn't need regular sessions
- I told Stanko we are still awaiting written summary from  
Institute of Living

Planning Zula's Return to Ministry

In May, 1988, a summary of facts was prepared in connection with a lawsuit filed on behalf of victim against the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Among other things, the summary documented the victim's abuse, and the abuse of the victim's brother, by Fr. Robert Wolk. However, the summary also stated that at some point Wolk himself had criticized Zula for "having wild parties with drugs and alcohol."

By September 1988, a criminal investigation was underway. On September 22, 1988, the Pennsylvania State Police interviewed the victim who, among other things, reported that he was first sexually abused by Wolk in 1981. Zula then began sexually assaulting him in 1984 at which time the victim was still under the age of 16. The victim further advised that the sexual abuse occurred approximately once a week for another three years and that it included oral sex, sado-masochistic behavior, and attempts at anal sex. On November 10, 1988, an arrest warrant was issued for Zula. There is no indication that the Diocese disclosed their prior knowledge of Zula's conduct or Zula's confession to the police or to the public.

Zula was charged with over 130 counts related to child sexual abuse. His arrest generated significant press coverage. In the midst of the public outcry, Charles P. Nemeth, Esquire wrote a letter to the editor of the Pittsburgh Catholic magazine dated October 20, 1988. A copy of this letter was found within the Diocesan records. Among other things, Nemeth advised that he was a practicing Catholic and has been a criminal defense attorney for 10 years, which included representing sex offenders. Further, Nemeth advised that he held an LLM degree in Law Psychiatry and Criminology from Georgetown University. Nemeth then advised that he was "awe-struck by how reticent church officials are to condemn this activity as being criminal in scope and form." He criticized the "academic ponderings" and "other esoteric psychiatric diagnoses" that characterized child sexual abuse as "deviance and social aberration" and added that "in fact, it is

probably one of the more heinous criminal activities that individuals can ever engage in. The reasons are self-evident.” He then stated some of these reasons, which included the “higher standard of conduct” that should be required of priests; the “pedestal” on which priests are placed; that “sexual molestation between adults and minors is one of the most reprehensible forms of conduct outlined in statutory and codified law;” and that to “equate the social diseases of alcoholism and drug dependency with child molestation is an absolute and unadulterated folly.”

In November 1988, personnel from the Diocese, including its attorney, met with the Western Regional Office of Children, Youth, and Families (“WROCYF”). A summary of the meeting was then provided to Wuerl in an April 24, 1989 letter from the WROCYF. Among other things, Wuerl was reminded that the Diocese was considered to be a “mandated reporter” of child abuse and thereby required to report any suspected cases of which it became aware. Further, Wuerl was notified that the Diocese was prohibited from conducting its own internal investigations to decide whether or not to report the abuse and was required to report it immediately. The letters exchanged between the WROCYF and the Bishop illustrated a disagreement as to whether the law’s mandates applied to Diocesan personnel.

In the midst of this public scandal, on March 1, 1989, Wuerl authorized a confidential settlement between the Diocese and the family of the victim and his brother (who was also a victim) in the amount of a \$500,000 lump sum with a separate amount of \$400,000 to be paid over a period of 30 years. The settlement contained a “confidentiality agreement” which prohibited the victims from discussing the settlement or basis for the settlement with any third parties - unless agreed to by the Diocese. The settlement released the Bishop, the Diocese, and the Roman Catholic Church from any further liability with respect to the matter.

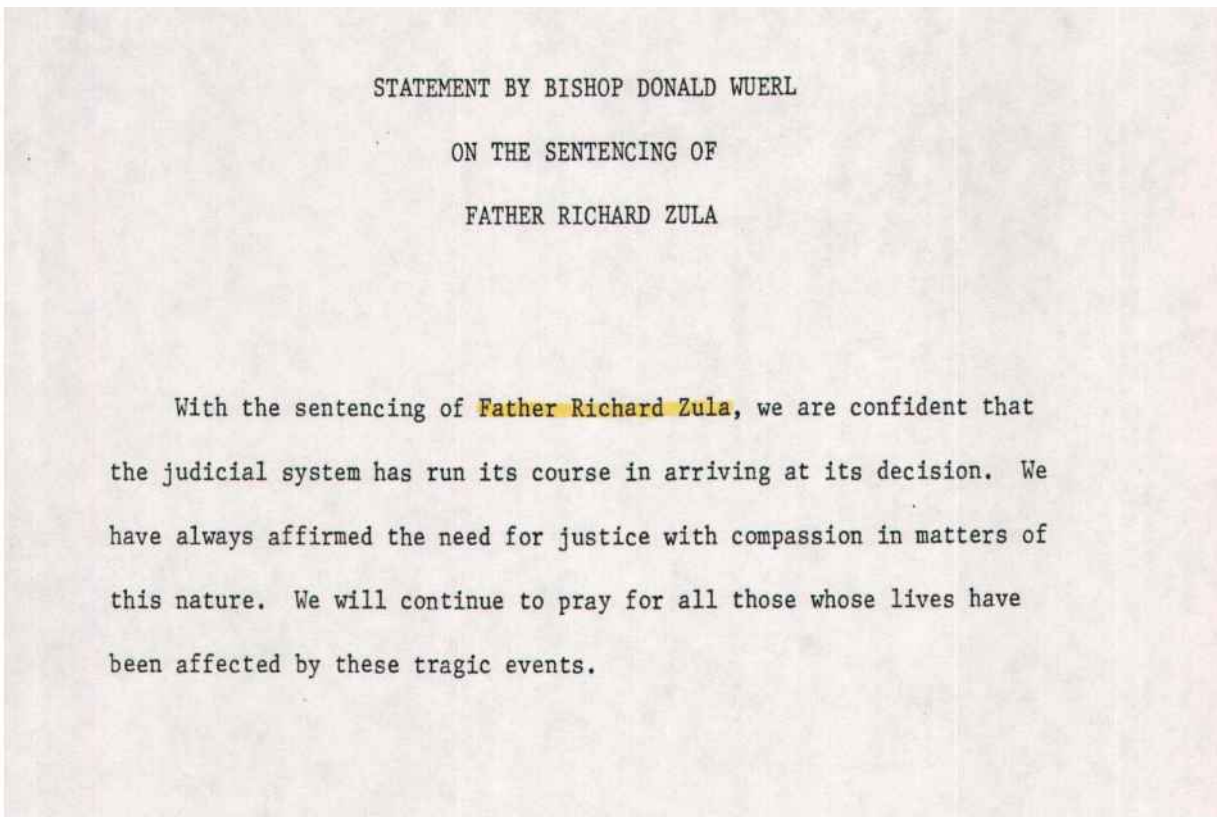
By the fall of 1989, Zula had entered a guilty plea to two counts and was awaiting sentencing. At that time, the Diocese began to receive additional complaints of child sexual abuse against Zula. Father Ron Lengwin documented a telephone call that he received from a parishioner on August 25, 1989. The caller advised that Zula had made frequent sexual advances on her son and at least two of his friends when they were 13-year-old altar boys. The mother reported that Zula asked the boys to pose like statues and attempted to tie them up using rope. The Grand Jury found this mother's report to be consistent with the testimony of George. However, there was no indication that the Diocese reported this complaint to law enforcement. In fact, the Diocese was utilizing diocesan resources and personnel to advocate for Zula at his upcoming sentencing proceeding.

On October 23, 1989, Kenneth Stanko, a doctor obtained by the Diocese to work with Zula, wrote a letter to Father Rutkowski. Stanko enclosed a copy of his evaluation of Zula which he conducted for presentation at Zula's sentencing. Stanko advised that this evaluation was also sent to the court. Among other things, Stanko opined that Zula's "personality style is one of being passive-dependent and that he would not likely be a person to initiate sexual activity." By this letter, the Diocese was placed on notice that the services it had procured for Zula were being used as mitigation evidence at Zula's sentencing. Moreover, these assertions blamed the child victim rather than the adult criminal.

Stanko wrote that Zula had admitted to "mutual masturbation and fellatio with one sixteen-year male" but only because "the boy first suggested sexual behaviors." Stanko further noted that Zula had also admitted to "mild sado-masochistic" behaviors with several boys. However, Stanko concluded that Zula "has never exhibited psychotic symptoms or any disturbance to his thinking and reasoning. I have never doubted his sincerity or honesty." The Grand Jury notes that while

Diocesan resources were being used in such a fashion, unknowing parishioners were still actively tithing from their income without knowledge that church funds were being used to mitigate a convicted sex offender's sentence.

In preparation for Zula's sentencing, a press release issued by Wuerl stated, in part, ". . . the judicial system has run its course in arriving at its decision."



#### The Bishop's Public Statement

In 1990, after Zula was sentenced to state prison, the Diocese agreed to set aside \$500.00 per month until his release, at which time he would be paid the full amount in a lump sum. The Diocese also informed Zula that he would not be given any new assignments and asked him to consider requesting a dispensation from the priestly ministry. Zula responded in a letter dated



September 11, 1990. He wrote that had the Diocese supported him, he may not have pleaded guilty. He then accused the Diocese of paying for his treatment in order to “save their own hide.” Zula further advised that the District Attorney had offered to make a deal with him if he divulged names of other priests involved in pedophilia and that he

could have named several priests; however, out of a sense of loyalty to my brother priests, and to try to protect the Church from any further scandal, I would not divulge their names, even to save myself from a jail term.

Zula stated he would sign the petition for dispensation if the Diocese arranged for his release from prison first.

In March, 1992, Zula informed the Diocese that he might be eligible for early release in July and requested that Wuerl confirm his future salary payments to assist him in obtaining his release. In response to Zula’s request, internal Diocesan documents revealed that Wuerl directed his subordinates to provide the requested information. The Diocese also agreed to increase Zula’s sustenance payments to \$750 per month after his release and to provide him with medical coverage. When Zula was released in July, 1992, he received a check in the amount of \$11,542.68 from the Diocese.

Glory to  
Jesus Christ!

MARCH 4, 1992

DEAR BISHOP WUERL: -

How ARE YOU? I HOPE FINE! - I JUST WANTED TO GIVE YOU AN UPDATE ON WHAT'S GOING ON. I WAS REQUIRED TO SUBMIT A "HOME-PLAN" AND A "JOB PLAN" TO THE PA. PAROLE BOARD ON MARCH 3, 1992. THEY WANTED TO KNOW WHAT INCOME I WOULD RECEIVE UPON RELEASE, AND WHO WAS MY EMPLOYER.

I INFORMED THEM THAT I WOULD RECEIVE \$750. SUPPL. SALARY/PENSION AND INSURANCE MEDICAL COVERAGE FROM THE "PGH. CATHOLIC DIOCESE".

BISHOP WUERL, IT IS EXACTLY FOUR MONTHS TO MY RELEASE DATE; JULY 4, 1992. THERE WILL BE FIREWORKS WHEN I GET OUT!

PLEASE REMEMBER ME IN YOUR PRAYERS DURING THIS SACRED LENTEN SEASON. I WISH YOU A VERY SPIRITUAL AND FRUITFUL LENT.

your Brother in Christ,  
Rich Zula

\* I HAVE ALSO WRITTEN TO  
FR. GUAY.

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Zula's Letter to Wuerl Regarding Early Release from Prison

The Diocese continued to receive reports of past criminal conduct on the part of Zula after his release. In a 1993 letter to Wuerl, a victim reported that Zula “systematically ask[ed] me to strip, assume a kneeling position, have my hands tied by a closeline type rope and subject me to a beating with various types of whips and leather straps.” Shortly after this report, the Diocese finally began “laicization,” the process to remove Zula as a priest.

On January 20, 1995, Wuerl met with Zula to discuss his future salary and medical benefits. They discussed his dispensation from priestly vows but Zula was hesitant to agree to his removal because he did not think he could support himself. Zula suggested the possibility of a lump-sum payment which Wuerl referred to as “cushion income.” After further discussion, Wuerl was open to the idea of Zula receiving a lump-sum payment of \$180,000.00. Zula countered, however, with a request for “\$240,000.00 (TAX FREE).” Additional internal documents indicated that the Diocese weighed Zula’s request. Three pages of undated handwritten notes with the heading “FROM THE DESK OF Father Guay” referenced Zula’s concern regarding his July, 1995 payments and the figures of \$180,000 and \$240,000. The words “slush fund – under table” were also included on the notes. Similarly, in a November 24, 1995 letter sent from Zula to Wuerl, Zula stated that he had recently met with Guay and Father Dinardo who informed him that if he were to resign from the active priestly ministry, he would still be entitled to receive his monthly sustenance payments and medical coverage. In light of this representation, Zula stated his desire to resign.

In 1996, the Diocese entered into a memorandum of understanding with Zula whereby he was allowed to resign and was prohibited from ever seeking future assignments within the Diocese. In return, the Diocese agreed that it would continue to pay him \$750.00 per month for sustenance and provide medical coverage for him.

On January 31, 2001, another victim disclosed abuse by Zula. The victim reported that Zula asked him to remove his clothes so that he could beat him with a belt. On December 14, 2001, the Diocese increased Zula's sustenance payments to \$1,000 per month as of January, 2002.

In July, 2007 the Diocese learned that Zula had been volunteering at the Good Shepherd Church in Braddock. The Diocese dispatched a letter to Zula reminding him that such activity was not permitted.