

Dec. 3, 1980

Mother O'Connor Victim 3

Sr. Ann Ellen Quirk and [redacted] came in to discuss Donald O'Connor. Mother O'Connor Victim 4 was also supposed to come. However, yesterday she again went to Don and talked to him about what has happened to him with her son. Don tearfully begged her not to come and see that bishop; told that he would be removed and no priest would replace him because of the shortage; and that he was getting help for himself. He told her that Lee Marco was counseling him. Because of these remarks, Mother V 4 did not come.

These ladies told a story of repeated attempts of Fr. Donald to sexually assault their teen age sons (14 - 17). He took one of them on a trip and at the motel that night grabbed the young V3. He hit Don and was afraid to sleep that night. For a year after that incident he was afraid to be near Don. Only now is he working through the anxiety caused by this attack.

Things seem to have escalated in September. Don's mother has lived with him for some time, but lately is spending more and more time away from the rectory. When she is gone, Don has forced at least two boys on the bed in the rectory. One fought him off. The other result is vague V4. [redacted] has worked around the rectory for some months and goes with Father shopping, etc. The two women who saw me felt he may have a homosexual tendencies since he kept going back to the rectory when all others refused to do so.

Sr. Ann Ellen sees many of the teenagers at St. Rose in Wilmington; they no longer go to Bradiwood. Many of these are the staunch Catholic families in town. Although only two of the four or five boys involved have gone to their parents and confided in them, these women felt that some rumors might be circulating in town.

Sr. Ann Ellen who knew Don when he was an associate in Wilmington feels he has some deep-seated problems. According to her, he hated his father who died when he was 13; and of course been very close to his mother. He cannot relate well with adults at their level. When he preaches, he closes his eyes even when talking to the children. In his CCD classes he tells kids that it is a sin to smoke; to look at yourself in the mirror when naked, etc.

From my own personal observations I know that he has an inordinate fear of the Bishop and the Chancery. These are authority figures which threaten him. He has said that he would be happy to live in Bradiwood forever, without once having to come to Joliet. He does not always attend priests' gatherings, staying by himself or with a highly select group. He is extremely nervous individual.

If you call him in, I would expect him to be extremely threatened. It could be a very emotional encounter; or merely a superficial agreeing to everything you say in order to make the encounter as brief as possible. He certainly needs far more professional help than Lee Marco can provide.

Jim Fitzgerald also called during the week. He knows all the families involved and can vouch for their sincerity and their real desire that Don get help. The long delay has come mainly from the hope that this cure could be affected without the Bishop being involved. They realize now that only a third party coming from outside can help.

William Donnelly

458 2125

December 8, 1985

CONFIDENTIAL

000154

Reverend Donald O'Connor - Immaculate Conception, Braidwood

After a Youth Mass on Sunday afternoon, I visited with Don for about 20 minutes to a half an hour. His mother lives with him, and has for 10 or 11 years. She is very pleasant, but quiet, but did stay so that I had no chance to talk to Don alone. However, I did tell him my purpose in coming was just to show him that I am interested. Don said about three times that he would be glad to go to Wilton Center when and if Father Irwin was transferred. He said he also told that to Bishop Imesch. I don't think he was just kidding. I told him that he has too much talent and potential for a small place like that. He said he is chaplain of the Will County Sheriff's Department and also would be glad to be a Master of Ceremonies for the Bishop. That would give him three things to do. Don said there is a lot of chasing around, visiting County policemen in the hospital, etc. I gathered he is not wildly enthused about the job, but he does not seem opposed to it, and somewhat seems to enjoy it. He said he is ill at ease in attending parties, as he is expected to do, and also does not know whether the people who he is called upon to visit are Catholic or not before he gets there. I take it he is a bit uncomfortable in those kinds of settings.

While we were talking, Matt Heberer came in. Father O'Connor seems to have a fine relationship with the young people of the parish. That was also evident in the sacristy before and after Mass. Don has two brothers, both of whom are married, older and live out of state, I believe.

+ R. Z/K
Bishop Roger Kaffer

RLK:bjd

000162

January 28, 1988

Reverend Donald O'Connor
St. Bernard's Parish
1313 Ridgewood Avenue
Joliet, IL 60432

Dear Don:

Just a note to tell you I did speak with Jim Lynch about your problems. Jim is going to talk to our diocesan attorney. He is aware of them and working on them, but does have some more pressing things to do for the diocese that have some real deadlines. Hence, be patient! I am sure he will get to it. I really don't see any way that I could be of further help, Don. Just be assured of my interest and a ready ear if you need to talk!

With a plea and a promise of continued mutual prayers always, I remain

Sincerely yours in the Sacred Heart,

Most Reverend Roger L. Kaffer
Auxiliary Bishop of Joliet
Vicar General

RLK:bjkd

cc: Mr. James Lynch

000214

April 3, 1995

CONFIDENTIAL

Memo re: Father Donald O'Connor

Don and I had a pleasant and innocuous visit. I commended him on the fine shape of the parking lots, buildings, etc. Everything is in tip-top shape maintenance wise. Don also showed me the back three lots that he purchased and cleaned up behind the rectory. It used to be a dumping ground and now you can see the street behind, and the grass is neat and well kept. Don himself and a volunteer from the parish take care of it.

We spent a good bit of time talking about his 91-year-old mother, who is quite frail. They had just come back from the doctor. She falls, is losing weight, and he is very concerned about her. We were able to trade stories.

Don repeated his usual theme that he wants Wilton Center when it is open, and I told him there is no way he is going to get Wilton Center. He still has ads in the newspaper. He has \$200,000.00 in the bank - about \$150,000.00 more than there was when he came.

He chided me for not having something in the paper about Ed Poff. He said there was something about Jim Lennon and the people in his parish are very interested and concerned about Ed Poff.

I mentioned my only two questions are annual retreat and cluster meetings. He said he always makes his annual retreat at Mundelein, and never attends cluster meetings. I chided him for that, but got absolutely nowhere. He said he has enough grief at the parish and doesn't need to go and hear the griping at cluster meetings. I told him other priests need his presence, but I'm sure I did not make a dent.

I asked if there was anything I could do to help him, and he said there isn't. I told him to give me a call if there is.

Bishop Roger Kaffer

RLK:bjd

cc: Bishop Joseph L. Imesch

000226

July 29, 1998

CONFIDENTIAL

Memorandum: Father Donald O'Connor

I asked Don if he had said Office of Readings, Morning Prayer and Daytime Prayer, and, of course, he had prayed all of them, so I said we want to start with prayer, so we said my Prayer to the Sacred Heart. And then I gave him a crucifix brought back from the Ad Limina visit.

I would not characterize Don as hostile, but pretty close to resentful about coming for these visits. I think this was the third or fourth time that Barb rescheduled him, and I still haven't seen Dick Ross after the same or more. I probably did not help by my response to Don's opening question.

He asked if he could get an extension at St. Bernard's. I said I didn't think there was a chance in the world of that. Then he said how about a one-year extension? I asked what the reason for that would be. He said his 35th Anniversary. I said maybe 25th, but I didn't think he stood much chance at all of getting an extension for his 35th, but he could put it in writing in December after my letter goes out. I said I'm only one member of the Board, but would review it and make a recommendation to Bishop Imesch, but I think he'd be much better off to prepare himself and his people for his transfer. He obviously was not pleased with my reluctance. I told him I know his people love him and that he is doing a great job at St. Bernard's.

I also told him not to think about Wilton Center, because I am sure that that will become a mission of another parish when Sal Giunta retires. He said there is some growth in that area, but I observed our shortage that will increase in the next several years. Don said we should be closing parishes, and that Bishop Imesch's successor is going to have to come in and close a whole bunch all at once because he won't close them now. I told him I thought by that time there would be a turn around in vocations, and that if we had worked as hard the last 25 years encouraging vocations, as we did to get lay people ready to take the priests' place (which they really can't do), we would have enough priests today.

000293

CONFIDENTIAL MEMO

O'Connor Victim 1

May 21, 2002

Tonight I met with a former student of mine, at his request. He said he does not wish to be identified, does not wish to be drawn into the legal arena. He is coming forward because Bishop Imesch asked that anyone abused by a priest do so. 27 years ago, he was abused one time by Father Donald O'Connor. Father O'Connor was a very good friend of his family, was a frequent visitor to their home, and often took him and his siblings on outings, for ice cream, etc. One night, this boy and a buddy were supposed to stay overnight with Father O'Connor, but the other boy was sick and unable to come. So just the two of them played cards. They played in their underwear. The winner was to be able to fondle the genitals of the loser. The young man, not wanting to touch Father O., said he knew he could lose and would not have to. And he did. Moreover, he told Father O. that he did not have to touch him, but Fr. O. insisted, and fondled him, then started to masturbate him. The young man told him to stop, and said he had to go to the bathroom, and locked himself in the bathroom. He told Father O. to "Go away." And then went to bed himself at the rectory. He declined ever to go back to the rectory. This took place in the rectory at Braidwood. On many previous occasions he had been on outings with Fr. O., both alone and with others, but there was never anything improper.

He never told his parents, but will do so, after talking to me. He has told only two other persons: one of his siblings; and his fiancée during their pre-Cana marriage preparation, when they were challenged to tell their intended spouse anything they had not yet confided. Since the recent announcement about Father O.'s removal, earlier this week he and his wife talked about it again, and he told his wife that he was going to see me and tell me. She has always been very supportive of him.

I offered him counselling, but he said he really doesn't think he needs it. He is in an administrative position, and often is in my chair in such situations. But he said if he later feels he needs some help, he will let us know. He once expressed concern that he should have come forward years ago. I told him not to judge himself as a young man from the vantage point of the wisdom he now has as a mature adult. He wanted to know what the next step is. I said the first thing would be the offer of counseling, which I had already made. I likewise told him I would of course have to tell both Bishop Imesch and our diocesan attorney, and very frankly I didn't know whether this would have to go to the State's Attorney, but I presumed it would. However, I assured him, since he had initially said in making the appointment that he wanted to come to get some spiritual guidance and repeated tonight that he wishes to remain anonymous, that I would not identify him to anyone. He told me he knew he would one day have to talk to someone about it, and had long ago decided that someone would be me, because I had had such a profound impact on him as his principal. He likewise said that his Catholic Faith has been a bulwark for him – and continues to be. He has no desire to meet with Father O'Connor, but said he has long ago forgiven him, and he thinks that forgiveness is necessary to be at peace oneself. We had started with prayer, ended with prayer and he also wanted to receive that Sacrament of Reconciliation, saying that was an added reason he wanted to come to see me. I was very impressed with this man, and told him so!

+ Roger L. Keffner

DIOCESE OF JOLIET

000294

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

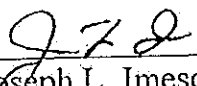
MEMORANDUM
FOR THE FILE

May 22, 2002

RE: Father Donald O'Connor

I spoke with **Mother O'Connor Victim 3** on Monday, May 20th. **Mother** lives in St. Rose Parish in Wilmington. She said that **Friend of O'Connor Victim 3**, a friend of Father O'Connor from Braidwood, had asked her son, **Friend of O'Connor**, to go to Chicago together with him. For some reason **Friend of O'Connor** did not go and Father O'Connor took **V3** to a hotel in Chicago. Evidently Father O'Connor attempted to abuse him, but the boy, whom she said was small, was also a wrestler and he fought Father O'Connor off. He spent the night huddled in a corner of the room. **Mother** wanted **mother of V3 Friend** to come with her to the Chancery but she would not come. She said that she and Sister Ann Ellen came and saw Father Donnelly, but he would not let her see the bishop. This was in 1978.

She said when Father O'Connor brought the boy home, **O'Connor Victim 3** walked right past her without saying anything. Father O'Connor was cheery and jovial. She knew that something had happened and after Father O'Connor left the boy told her. She said that **O'Connor Victim 3** is now living in California and is fine, but wanted me to be aware of what had happened. She said that she told Sister Ann Ellen Quirk about this. Sister Ann Ellen told her that she knew of at least three others who had been abused by Father O'Connor.


Bishop Joseph L. Imesch

cc-Bishop Roger Kaffer
Bishop James Fitzgerald
James Byrne

JAMES C. BYRNE & ASSOCIATES
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS AT LAW
815 NORTH LARKIN AVENUE - SUITE 202
JOLIET, ILLINOIS 60438

0298-A-

JAMES C. BYRNE

TELEPHONE (815) 744-7171

J. DANIEL MCGRATH, JR.

FAX (815) 744-7179

May 30, 2002

Sheldon R. Sobol
Grundy County State's Attorney
111 E. Washington Street
Morris, Illinois 60450

Re: Allegations of misconduct
Father O'Connor

Dear Mr. Sobol:

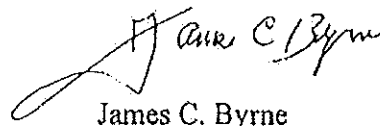
This is in reply to your letter of May 29, 2002.

Your letter was timely. On May 29, 2002 our Chancellor Sister Judith received two telephone calls in relation to Father O'Connor. I am enclosing her brief memorandum of those conversations. The first involves a report by **O'Connor Victim 5**

The second involves a gentlemen who has requested that his name be kept confidential. At this time I am enclosing the memorandum of that phone call with this man's name and phone number deleted. However, our Chancellor will phone this individual with the goal of having him consent to his name being released to the State's Attorney's office, I think this might be the simplest way to handle this. If he insists on confidentiality, I am sure we can work out another way so that you can obtain his name and pursue whatever investigation you deem proper.

The Diocese would be more than happy to comply with your request and I will obtain the necessary Affidavit that you have suggested, but I thought it best at this time to forward our two most recent phone calls.

My Best Regards,



James C. Byrne

JCB/jsr
Enclosure

O'Connor Victim 6

000498-B-

May 29, 2002

O'Connor Victim 6 a parishioner at St. Rose Parish in Wilmington, called this morning to report the sexual abuse he had received.

In 1976 when he was 15 years old, he was in Braidwood and suffered abuse from Fr. Donald O'Connor. He said that he has shared his experience only with his wife.

O'Connor Victim 6 wants his name kept confidential.

O'Connor

000302

Parents of O'Connor Victim 2

May 31, 2002

Dear **Father of O'Connor Victim 2**

Your E-Mail to Sister Judith Davles was shared with me, as you asked that it be. I am delighted that I had some part in influencing you to pursue a career in education. Congratulations for having coached and taught and been an Assistant Principal for the past two years at a large high school in Arizona.

I might share with you the two strong convictions I have about youth:

- 1) Youth (and I tell them there is a Y-O-U in youth) are not problems to be dealt with, but partners to work with!
- 2) Youth are not the Church and the world of the future, but the present, as well as the future.

You might also be interested in the two slogans I had on my desk at Providence, and that I still have on my desk at home. They are the only two slogans that I have:

- 1) "None of us is as smart as all of us."
- 2) "If you think you can, or if you think you can't, you're probably right."

I got the second from the wrestling wall when Tim Ruettiger was the coach. I just learned within the last six months that Henry Ford is the one who first said that. But I think it's really very accurate.

Father of O'Connor Victim 2

know the reason you wrote was Father O'Connor. I had the most unpleasant task of going to inform the parish council at 4 o'clock and then reading a letter from Bishop Imesch at the 5 o'clock Mass at Coal City a few weeks ago.

000303

Father of O'Connor Victim 2

-2-

May 31, 2002

I want to apologize to you that a Catholic priest abused you. I'm happy that you are now going to seek some counseling, and I want you to know that the Diocese of Joliet will be happy to pay for that counseling. I'm sure that your letter will be presented next week at a meeting of the Review Committee, but I am sure that they will authorize counseling. But in the meantime, you can use this letter to present to the counselor so that the bill can be sent to the Diocese of Joliet.

Be assured of my prayers for and with you. It sounds to me like you have your act together very well, and I commend you.

You said you were looking forward to a reply, but since you have made special mention of me in your letter to Sister Judith and asked that it be brought to the attention of both Bishop Imesch and me, I am replying for all of us. If there is anything further that I can do to help you in any way at any time, don't hesitate to call.

I'm enclosing for both you and your wife copies of a prayer I wrote on Calvary, pray every day after Communion and many times each day. I wrote it on Calvary on the Feast of the Sacred Heart in 1984, shortly after you graduated. If you will recall, the new big gym at Providence has a mosaic of the Sacred Heart, and I did entrust the school to the care of the Sacred Heart, as I have at every assignment I was given in my priesthood. More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of!

With cordial personal regards, and with a plea and a promise of continued mutual prayers always, I remain

Sincerely yours in the Sacred Heart,

Most Reverend Roger L. Kaffer
Auxiliary Bishop of Joliet

RLK:bjd

Enclosure

bc: Bishop Joseph L. Imesch
Bishop James E. Fitzgerald
Sr. Judith Davies, O.S.F.
James C. Byrne

000310

July 2, 2002

Dear **O'Connor Parishioner 1**

Thank you for your letter of support on behalf of Father O'Connor. I know that he was a wonderful pastoral priest and did much good in the community. Unfortunately, many years ago, Father O'Connor sexually abused children. These allegations have been substantiated.

Those who know Father O'Connor would hope that he could be forgiven and allowed to return to ministry. The majority of Catholic people, however, think that if a priest were accused of sexual abuse of children, he should not be allowed to serve publicly as a priest. As you know, this is the policy which the Bishops adopted at their meeting in Dallas. Because of that fact, I do not think it will be possible for Father O'Connor to minister again as a priest.

I do hope that you will let him know of your support and concern and that you will pray for him. Thank you for your letter.

With every best wish,

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Joseph L. Imesch
Bishop of Joliet

The above letter was sent to all of the attached.

000328

Dear Bishops Imesch & Kaffer,

5/29/02

I would like to see what the diocese will do w/ Father O'Connor.

A teacher at a school where I taught lost his teaching certificate and was arrested for sexual misconduct w/ a minor.

I am only interested in seeing that Father O'Connor never work with children or youths.

I anxiously await a reply.

I will contact Ill. County officials.

Sincerely,

Father of O'Connor Victim 2

P.S. Please find my e-mail enclosed.
Thanks for your help!

JUN - 4 2002

O'Connor Parishioner 2

000330

6/5/02

Bishop Kaffer,

I would like to thank you for your 5/31/02 letter. National headlines regarding sex scandals in the Catholic Church have admittedly affected the way I view the Catholic clergy as of late.

Receiving your letter renews my faith that clergy of character, integrity, and honesty → people like you Bishop Kaffer → will ensure that God's message will go unaffected! Thanks! Sincerely,

O'Connor Parishioner 2

000336

True copy of handwritten letter

Dear Bishop Imesch,

We know that allegations of sexual abuses has hit our Diocese and caused all of us deep sadness.

We do not believe all of these claims are true. We believe some of these people who are making these charges are just looking to smear the priests name and to get money for their revenge.

Two of the priests we know personally were at one time serving at St. Bernard's here in Joliet.

One was Fr. Poff and the other was Father O'Conner. Both were very good pastors when at St. Bernards's We knew Fr. O more than we knew Fr. Poff.

Whenever we went to the pancake breakfasts we have never seen a priest say Mass and then fly down to not only gree the parishioners, he also helped serve the breakfast with the other workers.

Stations of the cross duing Lent are very much a part of recalling the passion of Our Lord. When Fr. O had the stations at St. Bernard' he was the only priest that I know who had benediction after the stations. Too bad so many parishes do not take the time to have bendiction—it seems like they hurry through the stations and out we go. What's the hurry?

Our Lord couldn't run through his time of passion—it took time—but we never learn.

Fr. O never hurried with anything he did for people. He always was there for anyone who sought his help.

Only God knows if Father O is guilty of what they said he did. I'm not God and my family and I would never judge another person.

Someday we too will have to account for our faults before the Almighty. We only wish our lives could be filled with half of the good deeds Father O has on his record.

Live nowadays has become a society of finger pointing, suing, and blackening a person's character. Forgiveness is never enered into the picture.

One strik and you're out. Take for example, best friends who have gotten divorced—who invites them to gatherings—no one. People write you off their list.

Families who have individuals who were accused of something—who tries to help them? But gossip—gossip you betcha. What did you hear—this is what I heard and the list goes on to even the silent treatment when other people see that family in the grocery store or at Mass.

Yes, some priests have gone on and on many times abusing young people, but it is not EVERY SINGLE priest.

Another thin is—why is the priest's name brought up, bu the person who accused the priest is presented to us as John Doe. How sad—don't mention my name. If you accused someone then by golly put your name in the newspapers too.

000337

The payoff of money is something that does not set right in our book either.

If the priest is truly found to be guilty of the accusation and is found to have repeatedly done things then remove them from the parish he is serving and an apology given to the victim and see that the priest and the victim both receive therapy.

No large payoff is needed—if the therapy is given—that's a payment in itself.

Father O has been accused of something he did many years ago, but when you think about it he has more than made up for it by helping more people with all their problems all along the way.

In confession, we confess our sins and receive absolution, are given a penance to say and ask God for his forgiveness. God forgives us why can't we forgive others who have failed as a human being?

Hope you bishops give this issue a serious consideration? You don't become a priest overnight, it takes many years of study. They're not perfect and God doesn't ask us to be perfect. He only asks us to believe, love Him and try our best everyday.

We are human and we will all make mistakes in our life, but we pick up ourselves and try to start over again and again until we die.

We will pray for you bishops when you try to come to solutions for this problem next week.

Sincerely,

O'Connor Parishioner 3,4



Diocese of Joliet
Chancery

000343

425 Summit St.
Joliet, Illinois 60435

815-722-6606
Fax 815-722-6602

June 20, 2002

Reverend Donald O'Connor
Assumption Parish
245 South Kankakee Street
Coal City, IL 60416

Dear Father O'Connor,

If you are in need of Mass stipends, please contact my secretary, Rachel, at the Chancery or myself and I will be happy to place you on our list of stipend recipients. Just let us know the number you would need each month and a check will be issued every three months. Should you wish to adjust the amount, please call or write and we will change the amount.

May God bless you with an enjoyable summer!

With every best wish, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Sister Judith A. Davies, OSF
Chancellor