

"This superb collection of essays provides Catholics with a series of high-powered lenses for examining the monolith of clerical corruption that has thwarted Gospel justice in the twenty-first century. Moving us deeper into the root causes behind today's painful headlines, contributors not only demonstrate the power of feminist analyses in exposing the long arc of misogyny and sexism, they also unflinchingly expose prelates who cover up crimes and they illuminate the power of the #MeToo movement to shift the narrative and expose the lackadaisical reporting by media outlets on the abuse of women religious in recent years. Overall, these contributors remind us that muscular correctives are available and being engaged against a rotting clericalist system. They illuminate critical remedies for holding Catholic clerics accountable, establishing full equality for women, and transforming hierarchical concepts of authority, power, and gender in order to carry out the work of the Gospel for today's world." —**DEBORAH ROSE-MILAVEC**, co-director of *Future Church*

Crisis and Challenge in the Roman Catholic Church: Perspectives on Decline and Reformation explores the historical, theological, sociological, and ethical dimensions of the current issues threatening the two-thousand-year-old Roman Catholic Church. The interdisciplinary analysis contained within this volume exposes the destructive convictions and actions of the Roman Catholic clergy that have produced the current institutional crisis while suggesting options for moving forward. Documenting cases that constitute the many crises currently surrounding Catholicism, this volume aims to provide clarity and conscience. At the same time, with a constructive vision of an ethics and religious practice rooted in integrity and transparency, the contributors offer a path towards holistic and holy reformation by and for Catholics.

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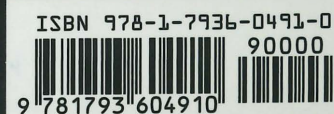
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Crisis and Challenge in the Roman Catholic Church

Meyers and
Barnett



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PERSPECTIVES ON DECLINE AND REFORMATION

Edited by Debra Meyers
and Mary Sue Barnett



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Chapter 6

The Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

The Eye of the Storm

Siobhan Fleming

Similar to how states have boundaries and within those are counties, a diocese is a geographic boundary for Catholic Churches led by one bishop. An archdiocese consists of several dioceses, led by an archbishop who has jurisdiction over each of the dioceses in his archdiocese.¹ In Texas, there are fifteen dioceses and two Archdioceses: San Antonio and Galveston-Houston. Individually on January 31, 2019, the fifteen Catholic dioceses in Texas simultaneously released the names of clergy credibly accused of sexually abusing minors.²

As a Catholic, a researcher of clergy sexual abuse, and a Houstonian, I anxiously waited that day, along with the local media outlets, for the list to appear on the website of the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston (ADGH).³ I did not have high expectations for a transparent and forthcoming list, and I was right in that regard, but it was an implosion, nonetheless. The disclosure was unprecedented in my home diocese, where for fifty years it managed to control and prevent the dissemination of information about sexual abuse allegations against clergy. The archdiocese gave very little information on the priests other than the parishes to which they were assigned and a few other pieces of data (i.e., ordination and retirement year, etc.). The list had no dates of parish assignments, when the alleged abuse occurred, or when the allegations were received by the archdiocese.

The revelation of the credibly accused clergy had a profound effect on me as a Catholic. The priests were my parish priests growing up. They were my professors in college. They were fellow alumni of the Catholic university I attended. These ordained men had sexually abused boys

I knew in high school. The bishop responsible for the cases prior to 1984 had confirmed me—one of the Catholic Church's seven sacraments meant to unite Catholics more firmly to Christ—when I was in seventh grade.⁴ The sacrament of confirmation is a visible rite of passage that the church believes was instituted by Jesus Christ. They are very serious occasions and are typically a very memorable part of childhood.⁵ It was a big deal to meet the bishop back in the 1980s. Thus, this list of credibly accused clergy that included some of the most revered men in my life hit me like a brick in January 2019.

When I began researching the priests on the disclosure list, I thought I was an insider in the church. I thought this because of my faithful attendance at mass and Holy Days of Obligation,⁶ my sixteen years of Catholic schooling, and my background as someone who grew up with a current bishop and went to school with so many of the priests in the diocese. Quite literally my life revolved around the connections I had to the Church in Houston. My educational, social, spiritual, and professional networks were all intertwined in tangible ways with the ADGH.

As I researched, it did not take me long to realize that I was not anything near an insider at all. The organization to which I belonged as a devout and practicing Catholic had deep hidden corners that were completely unknown to me; namely, ones that prioritized the reputation of the church above victims, ones that used Canon Law to dictate every step when responding to allegations of sexual abuse specifically designed to protect the reputation of the accused—not the victim.⁷ I learned that the church is a business that protects its brand, and accusations against its priests pose a viable threat to the brand. I learned that the church does not operate alone in its massive cover-up of sexual abuse by the priests; it is aided and abetted by a vast social and professional network of Catholics. In order to prove this thesis, we will begin by examining this archdiocese and the events leading up to the implosion in Texas that resulted in the list being made public on January 31, 2019.

The ADGH is the fifth largest diocese in the United States.⁸ Since 2004, His Eminence Daniel Cardinal DiNardo has led the 1.7 million Catholics in the ten counties that comprise the diocese. In 2016, DiNardo took on the additional role of president of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for a three-year term.⁹ DiNardo's role as president of the USCCB meant that his archdiocese received an unprecedented amount of media attention and the spring of 2018 began with a series of unfortunate events that forever changed the Catholic Church in the United States. Houston was involved directly or indirectly in each event, thus forming DiNardo's *Annus Horribilis* ("horrible year") 2018.

HORRIBILIS EVENT #1: PENNSYLVANIA (JUNE–AUGUST 2018)

As president of the USCCB, DiNardo was certainly aware that an intensive eighteen-month-long Pennsylvania Grand Jury Investigation had begun in 2016 in which the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General conducted a grand jury investigation into the sexual abuse by Catholic clergy in six Pennsylvania dioceses. In addition to being the president of the USCCB, DiNardo had served as a former priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh and was a longtime friend of Cardinal Wuerl, who was central to the grand jury report due to his former role as Bishop of Pittsburgh.¹⁰ For two months during the summer of 2018 the release of the report was held up in court—unnamed parties had requested that Pennsylvania's Supreme Court block its release. The unnamed parties—presumably priests and/or bishops named in the report—claimed they had not been granted due process to protect their reputational rights as guaranteed by the state constitution. On June 20, 2018, the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania did indeed block the release of the report.¹¹

Pennsylvania Attorney General, Josh Shapiro, responded to that ruling on June 29 stating that he would be taking legal action to force the report's release.¹² And then on July 6, 2018, nine Pennsylvania news outlets along with victims of clergy sex abuse filed a petition with the Pennsylvania Supreme Court saying that the release of the report was a "matter of extraordinary public importance."¹³ Ultimately, on July 27, 2018, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ordered that a redacted copy of the grand jury report be released. Subsequently, on August 14, 2018, the attorney general of Pennsylvania held a press conference reviewing the highlights of the devastating report.¹⁴ The press conference was live streamed on social media, complete with survivors of sexual abuse on stage with the attorney general who used a video montage to emphasize the abuse and degradation these victims endured. The details of the massive cover-up of their crimes only underscored the horrific nature of the abuse.

I watched the live press conference with my children—two in college and one in middle school. It was important for us as devout Catholics to understand what happened in the church even though it was difficult and beyond sickening. It also clearly spelled out that the cover-up of the abuse was a well-orchestrated, *policy-driven process* with many active co-conspirators.¹⁵ Shapiro, in my opinion, came across as smart, professional, strong, and intent on exposing corruption. Some colleagues of mine thought he was grandstanding with the drama of the video montage. A close friend, who is an apologist for the church, actually refuted the sensationalized information in the report, adding that it was all old news that had been dealt with already. It was a witch hunt, he declared.

When the press conference ended that day, Cardinal Wuerl, archbishop of the Diocese of Washington DC put out a press release saying of the grand jury report, “[it] confirms that I acted with diligence, with concern for the victims and to prevent future acts of abuse.”¹⁶ That statement was a very significant turning point for me as a researcher. The grand jury report was emotional and it was disturbing to read evidence of such depraved and coordinated sexual abuse of children and the cover-up by bishops like Wuerl. My reaction was a visceral one to protect my children and mourn for the children who were assaulted. Most people I spoke to about the report had the same reactions of disgust and revulsion. But Wuerl’s reaction was almost as if he had read a completely different report. How could it be that he believed he acted with diligence? Children were sexually assaulted. He allowed the abusers to stay on the payroll. There was plenty of irrefutable evidence that the abuse occurred. How could Wuerl think he acted with diligence if those priests weren’t put in prison?

I believe it was because Wuerl was referring to his actions with regard to *following the Canon Laws of the church*—not how he dealt with the criminal acts brought to his attention in the report. It was a turning point for me as a researcher because I have noticed this same peculiar doublespeak by the bishops; they answer questions that were not asked. They all *manage the information and control the narrative*.

Wuerl continued his hubris the same day when his archdiocese posted a link on its website to TheWuerlRecord.com—a website specially created to refute the points in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report and defend the cardinal. It was in shockingly poor taste. The backlash from the public was so swift that the site was taken down within 24 hours, and the communications director for the diocese took the blame for it.¹⁷

The release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report was important not only in terms of justice for the survivors of sexual abuse, but also because of the link to Houston’s own Cardinal DiNardo. The report referenced Wuerl more than 200 times relating to cases of abuse during his tenure as Bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh from 1988 to 2006. Wuerl’s diocese had ninety priests named in the report, the most of the six dioceses examined by the grand jury. DiNardo was not specifically mentioned in the redacted report. Of course, it is possible he was one of the redacted names, but that is not something that can be verified. Wuerl quickly became the subject of scorn and ridicule. An online petition to remove Cardinal Wuerl received more than 60,000 signatures by August 23, 2018.¹⁸ There was no further mention of Wuerl and DiNardo’s chummy past.

A recurring question I am asked in discussions about sexual abuse in the church is, *How could the bishops not put these guys in prison?* It is a painful realization as a Catholic to find out that it is an organization that is a closed

system. It runs by its own rules and regulations. And for myriad reasons, it does not conform to the commonly accepted societal norms and procedures when it comes to one of their priests sexually abusing a child. It is that simple. They do not have the same standards or abide by the same laws. The church has codified every action and process and the fact is, they don’t send their ordained clerics to prison without external intervention by a government agency or law enforcement.

HORRIBILIS EVENT #2: MCCARRICK AND WUERL (JUNE 2018)

As the legal machinations revolved around the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report unfolded during the summer of 2018, another tempest was brewing. On June 20, 2018, breaking news revealed that one of the most powerful Cardinals in the Catholic Church, Theodore McCarrick, had been removed from public ministry after a review board of the Archdiocese of New York found an abuse allegation “credible and substantiated.” The board found that he had sexually abused a sixteen-year-old altar boy while a priest in New York.¹⁹ Cardinal McCarrick was the first cardinal in history to step down from the College of Cardinals because of sexual abuse allegations.²⁰

I spoke to several colleagues who are Catholic scholars, philosophers, and theologians who were surprised, not because McCarrick was accused of sexually abusing a male, but because the boy was a legal minor. To a person, they all said it was well known that McCarrick had sex with men.

As is the case with most scandals in the church, this revelation formed just the tip of the iceberg. Soon tales of McCarrick’s sexual harassment of seminarians and priests came pouring out into the public domain. *The New York Times* reported that two separate lawsuits filed by victims alleged that Archbishop Theodore McCarrick sexually abused them when they were seminarians. *The New York Times* revealed that the church reached financial settlements with the victims.²¹ This wasn’t the first time McCarrick had been accused of being a predator. The late Richard Sipe wrote about the lawsuits and settlements eight years prior in May 2010.²² Sipe authored an article for his website titled, “The Cardinal McCarrick Syndrome”²³ in which he discussed the 2006 financial settlement from the dioceses of Metuchen and Newark, New Jersey. McCarrick was the founding Bishop of Metuchen, New Jersey from 1981 to 1986 when he was appointed archbishop of Newark until 2000.

When the McCarrick news engulfed Twitter in June of 2018, I remembered hearing his name repeatedly in Houston years earlier. I discussed it with a relative who already had joked that McCarrick was at Archbishop Joseph A.

Fiorenza's anniversary party in 2004. Fiorenza led the Diocese of Galveston-Houston as bishop from 1984 until his retirement in 2006. The anniversary party celebrating Fiorenza's fiftieth year as a priest was held at Reliant Stadium in Houston—the same stadium where the Super Bowl was held in February 2017. Thousands of people attended the event including Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington DC.²⁴ In July 2008 Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, then archbishop emeritus of Washington DC, graced Houston again with his presence as the archdiocese celebrated the dedication of its new \$49 million Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.²⁵

It struck me when I read about the anniversary and the dedication parties that the cardinals, archbishops, and bishops who support each other by showing up to significant events all know each other well. There aren't that many of them. In 2004 there were seven cardinals and 182 archbishops/bishops leading U.S. dioceses.²⁶ Three cardinals and forty-five bishops (25 percent of all U.S. bishops) were in attendance in Houston at Archbishop Fiorenza's fiftieth anniversary party. Thus, it is impossible for any reasonable person to believe the disclaimers that they didn't know anything about McCarrick's lawsuits or the complaints against him. For months after the McCarrick story broke, Cardinal Wuerl denied having any knowledge of the many credible allegations against McCarrick. Yet on January 15, 2019, Cardinal Wuerl said he forgot that he received a report in 2004 detailing McCarrick's inappropriate conduct from the Pittsburgh Diocesan Review Board.²⁷ Who among us wouldn't forget a report that the highest ranking American Cardinal was accused of sexually assaulting adult men in the seminary? It's a safe bet that Fiorenza and DiNardo knew.

The year 2004 is significant because the USCCB was still touting the 2002 "zero-tolerance" policy and the Dallas charter that outlined the process for dioceses to handle accusations of clergy sexual abuse of a minor.²⁸ McCarrick served on the four-person committee that drafted it. There was no mention of a process for sexual abuse accusations against bishops or cardinals.²⁹ When McCarrick was invited back to Houston for the Co-Cathedral dedication in 2008—it was after two dioceses had paid two men settlements for McCarrick's sexual abuse. There is no chance that the cardinals and bishops didn't know about the settlements. And they all knew he preyed upon young seminarians. And yet, Archbishop Fiorenza had him at the dedication in 2008.

It didn't make sense to me. McCarrick was retired by then. Wuerl took his place as Archbishop of Washington DC in 2006. Why would the bishops voluntarily include McCarrick in their celebrations? I wracked my brain trying to figure it out until I remembered that they operate under a different set of laws and social *mores*—they live in the world of the ordained with their peculiar loyalties to each other over those of God's people.

Maybe the world wasn't ready for the #MeToo movement in 2008. Maybe the media wouldn't have picked up on the significance of the McCarrick story. Maybe the Attorney General in Pennsylvania wouldn't have been interested in pursuing a grand jury. But ten years later, *the world was ready*, the media did pick up the McCarrick story, and the Pennsylvania Attorney General did get a grand jury to investigate six dioceses. All those events laid the foundation for the implosion in Houston.

HORRIBILIS EVENT #3: ARRESTS AND RAIDS (SEPTEMBER 2018)

Just a week before the release of the Pennsylvania Grand Jury report on August 8, 2018,³⁰ an adult male met with Cardinal DiNardo in Houston to discuss the sexual abuse he experienced as a minor in 1999 at the hands of a priest.³¹ Shortly after this meeting with DiNardo, the survivor filed a police report on August 27, 2018. A woman filed a similar complaint with the archdiocese against the same priest in 2001 for abusing her that same year, followed by an official police report on August 29, 2018. In an unprecedented move, the police issued a warrant for the arrest of a priest in the ADGH: Rev. Manuel La Rosa-Lopez, formerly of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Conroe (just north of Houston). The priest reported to the civil authorities on September 11, 2018³² and was charged with four counts of indecency to children.³³

The ADGH seemed to have a protective shield around it against negative press—particularly regarding its clergy—for more than fifty years leading up to this notable arrest. This protective shield, however, eroded by 2018. In rapid succession, the Conroe Police Department executed three unprecedented search warrants aimed at the church and its ordained clerics. On September 12, 2018, while LaRosa-Lopez sat in jail, the Conroe Police searched his residence at St. John Fisher Catholic Church, where he had been assigned since 2005. Police reported that they found documentation there indicating LaRosa-Lopez had been a patient at the Shalom Center—a diocesan treatment center for priests³⁴—from April 16, 2001 to January 3, 2002.³⁵ Subsequently, on September 17, 2018, the police searched Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Conroe where LaRosa-Lopez had been assigned when the abuse allegedly occurred. Then, two days later on September 19, 2018, the police descended on the Shalom Center in Splendora, Texas (just north of Houston).³⁶

Nothing could stop the tsunami of media attention brought to the ADGH in 2018, made all the more intense because of DiNardo's high profile position in the USCCB. On September 13, 2018—right in the middle of all those raids—Cardinal DiNardo was at the Vatican meeting with the Pope and three other top cardinals. He had requested the meeting August 16 to discuss the sexual

abuse scandals in the United States in general and the McCarrick allegations specifically.³⁷ DiNardo pledged to investigate the McCarrick allegations to “the full extent of the USCCB’s authority.”³⁸ On September 14, the Vatican Press Office released an unfortunate photo from this meeting—Pope Francis at his desk across from DiNardo, Cardinal Sean O’Malley, Los Angeles archbishop Jose Horacio Gomez, and Monsignor Brian Bransfield of Philadelphia, and they were all laughing hysterically.³⁹ The optics were terrible.

HORRIBILIS EVENT #4: ANNOUNCING THEIR PLANS (OCTOBER 2018)

When Cardinal DiNardo returned home to Houston that September, he kept a low profile, but had to return back to Rome from October 3 to 28 for the Synod on Young People, the Faith, and Vocational Discernment.⁴⁰ On October 10 seemingly out of the blue, from Rome, DiNardo recorded a video that was published in tandem with a press release. The video was odd, to say the least, emphasizing his nervousness and guilty deportment. His message stated that the fifteen Catholic dioceses in Texas had decided to release names of clergy credibly accused of sexually abusing a minor since 1950 and they would do so by the end of January 2019.

It seemed like a step forward toward transparency to rebuild trust, but there were many reasons to doubt this new transparency. The ADGH would be engaging the services of an outside consultant to conduct an independent review of its records so that the list could be as accurate and complete as possible. And yet the criminal investigation going on at that time after the LaRosa-Lopez arrest seemed to suggest that the archdiocese might not be interested in transparency at all. A high-powered criminal defense attorney had been hired by the archdiocese to defend LaRosa-Lopez. We can only assume that his attorney discussed with the cardinal what actions to take with regard to clergy sexual abuse. The second red flag was the outside consultant. The church has spent centuries keeping their documents hidden, inaccessible, and secret. The ADGH led by the president of the USCCB would never willingly hand over files to any outside entity unless something other than transparency was afoot.

Catholics were skeptical since we had long known that the church controls information and the official narrative. The cardinal’s credibility concerning this move took a blow a few weeks later on October 26, 2018, when blogger Rocco Palmo broke the story that on October 9, 2018—one day before DiNardo’s announcement—the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) issued a letter to Cardinal DiNardo as President of the USCCB⁴¹ ordering all Catholic dioceses and chancery offices in the United States, “to not destroy, discard,

dispose of, delete, or alter” any personnel records or records of abuse. William McSwain, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, signed the letter. Rocco Palmo further reported, “the letter was privately circulated to the nation’s hierarchy by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops on Tuesday, 23 October, and has duly spread since among internal counsels and personnel-chiefs across the stateside church’s 198 jurisdictions.”⁴² In light of the DOJ demand to the USCCB, DiNardo’s effort at transparency took on an air of panicked crisis response. Of course he had stated that the Texas Conference of Catholic Bishops had decided to release the names during a “recent meeting in Austin”⁴³ as if to imply the decision took place *before* the DOJ letter.

On November 2, 2018, I attended a gala in Houston that DiNardo also attended. He said the grace before dinner and kept a low profile. In years past I had interacted with him at this yearly event when he was much more jovial. But now in 2018, DiNardo humbly asked us to pray for him and his fellow bishops as they headed to Baltimore for the USCCB Fall General Assembly on November 12. That meeting would prove to be another implosion in DiNardo’s *annus horribilis*.

HORRIBILIS EVENT #4: PALACE INTRIGUE (NOVEMBER 2018)

I never paid attention to any of USCCB General Assemblies in my life before 2018, but I was glued to the live stream webcast of the November 2018 meeting. The bishops were set to discuss the abuse crisis. They would vote on processes to address sexual abuse, such as a third-party reporting mechanism, standards of conduct for bishops, and protocols for bishops resigned or removed because of abuse.⁴⁴ This would be DiNardo’s chance to show Catholics in the United States that the bishops were sincerely going to address the problem. Then the shocking blow came: DiNardo opened the General Assembly with the announcement that the Vatican ordered the bishops to delay all votes on proposed changes regarding how they would handle sexual abuse claims until after a February meeting with the Pope.⁴⁵ The audience shown on the live stream looked shocked, except Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago. He immediately stood up and said a cringe worthy, obsequious statement, apropos of nothing, “It is clear the Holy See is taking the abuse crisis seriously.”⁴⁶ Cupich then posed a clearly pandering question to DiNardo asking if the bishops could take nonbinding votes on the policy proposals. DiNardo replied that the bishops could discuss that idea on Tuesday.⁴⁷ DiNardo still seemed to be knocked off kilter from the announcement he had to make. Cupich’s bizarre statement and penetrating question seemed

to be more than just posturing. His passive-aggressive behavior seemed to shatter DiNardo's very core.

Later in the day, at a press conference DiNardo said the request to delay action came from the Vatican's Congregation for Bishops and that he was informed via a letter the night before. Coincidentally, two American Cardinals serve on the Congregation for Bishops: Cardinals Blase Cupich and Donald Wuerl. They were both at the assembly in Baltimore. So the whole Cupich drama earlier in the day now appeared to be palace intrigue and maneuvering. Cupich and Wuerl set out to cut DiNardo off at the knees, and they did. The Catholic News Agency reported that Wuerl had advance notice of the decision from Rome.⁴⁸ Of course he did. When Cupich asked the inane question about having a pretend nonbinding vote, one could almost visualize the vultures circling around DiNardo. Who could see these men as Christ's representatives on earth anymore; they looked more like senior executives orchestrating a coup.

At the time of the General Assembly, CBS Evening News was investigating the ADGH generally, and more specifically, DiNardo for keeping two accused priests in active ministry. On November 20, 2018, CBS reporter Nikki Battiste interviewed DiNardo while he was in Baltimore, or rather she attempted to do so.⁴⁹ The footage showed DiNardo walking away from the reporter with contempt as she was asking him questions. The USCCB had taken steps to keep reporters away from the bishops, cordoning off areas where the media could not enter. The CBS reporter happened upon DiNardo during a break and asked why he kept two priests in ministry, Rev. Terrence Brinkman and Rev. John Keller. DiNardo declared that he did not find the accusations against those priests to be credible. Then he walked in front of the female reporter and got on the escalator and walked into the meeting shutting the door. As a Catholic in the ADGH, I was embarrassed by his boorishness and lack of dignity in dealing with the media. He appeared to be shaken to the core. I wondered how Nikki Battiste had been able to get near DiNardo. No other bishops were spotted or filmed, let alone close enough to the cordoned off reporters for them to get a sound bite. The video clearly showed that DiNardo was down a floor from the meeting rooms. I asked a priest in Houston how it happened. He said that DiNardo had to leave the hotel to have a cigarette. Yes, he was at that time a chain smoker, and when he had to go outside to have a smoke, CBS was lucky enough to spot him coming back in.

We won't ever know the real machinations that went on behind the scenes at that General Assembly, but it was clear that DiNardo's power and authority were disappearing right before our eyes, and that the General Assembly that November was disastrous for the church. Yet, that wasn't the worst thing to happen to DiNardo that November.

HORRIBILIS EVENT #5: POLICE, DAS, TEXAS RANGERS, AND THE FBI (NOVEMBER 28, 2018)

While other U.S. dioceses have had more than their share of lawsuits and negative media coverage in the past three decades, such as Boston, Los Angeles, and San Diego, Galveston-Houston largely avoided them. Even our neighbors in the Diocese of Dallas had gone through the ringer in the late 1990s,⁵⁰ settling a lawsuit brought by twelve victims against Rev. Rudy Kos. A jury verdict awarded them \$119 million, and Kos was criminally convicted and received four life sentences. Galveston-Houston, however, had been spared a lot of the scandal associated with sexual abuse.

In 2004 then bishop Joseph Fiorenza reported the results of a USCCB commissioned survey by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, who examined the scope of clergy sexual abuse in the United States.⁵¹ In an astounding show of hubris, Fiorenza announced in the *Texas Catholic Herald* that between the years of 1950 and 2002, only twenty-two priests and four deacons sexually abused forty-six minors in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Galveston-Houston. He added that nearly all of the abuse occurred before 1980.⁵² Fiorenza assured everyone that the perpetrators had either died, resigned, or were removed from ministry as of 2004, as he underscored the insignificance of their numbers. The twenty-two priests only represented a small fraction—less than 1 percent—of the 2,285 priests who had served the diocese since 1950. But the data he provided cannot be verified. And of course there was no way to find any accusations against clergy unless there were public records of some sort.

The other piece of Fiorenza's statement that 80 percent of the abuse happened before 1980, but was reported between 1994 and 2004, is also unverifiable. He used the same method of obfuscation we have seen with Wuerl and his answer about how diligent he was as a bishop in Pittsburgh. It is the same convoluted logic used when the bishops were asked a straightforward question and instead answered a question that was not asked. Fiorenza released information and data that are held under lock and key, known only to the archdiocese, that no one can verify. In a discussion about Fiorenza's summary of the clergy sexual abuse, a fellow Catholic who is an avowed apologist for the church told me repeatedly that Fiorenza wouldn't tolerate clerical sex abuse. The flaws in this argument are myriad, and my response is the obvious one: the only difference between the ADGH and Dallas, Boston, Los Angeles, and San Diego is that Houston has not had the external interventions by law enforcement or lawsuits. The Statute of Limitations is one factor for the lack of lawsuits. An examination of other possible reasons for the lack of publicly known sexual abuse accusations warrants a separate study altogether. In any event, by 2018 the long reign of Galveston-Houston's cone of silence was ending.

THE RAID: NOVEMBER 28, 2018

On November 27, 2018, a person involved in the LaRosa-Lopez case tipped me off that the next day there would be a raid on the Chancery Office of the ADGH. The archdiocese has always been immune to these types of humiliating acts. On the off chance it was accurate information, I drove to the chancery office in downtown Houston, right next to the \$49 million Co-Cathedral. I arrived at 8 a.m. and sat across from the chancery and waited. I noticed when a local news crew arrived about 30 minutes later and stayed in their van. Then at 9:30 a.m., like a scene out of a movie, the one-square city block the chancery resides on was surrounded all at once, from all directions. Large black SUVs, Conroe police department cars with the sirens blaring and lights rolling ran red lights and blocked intersections giving room for vans and trucks to pull up close to the building. The District Attorney from Montgomery County was there. It was his raid. He held a press conference outside the building.⁵³ There was an endless procession of Texas Rangers complete with their uniform Stetson cowboy hats. I was told the FBI was there as well. Reports stated that more than sixty-five officers and agents participated that day. It was an impressive feat coordinating so many agencies and officers. I stayed a few hours to watch as the media showed up, slowly at first, then swarmed with helicopters and every reporter, it seemed, in Houston. They stayed well past 10 p.m. that evening.

The media released the official warrant the District Attorney and Conroe Police obtained in order to execute the search.⁵⁴ It detailed the abuse by LaRosa-Lopez in excruciating detail. It revealed information about the first victim—a sixth-grade boy in 1992—when LaRosa-Lopez was apparently assisting at St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Houston. The warrant stated that there were only two letters relating to that complaint that the archdiocese turned over to the Conroe Police; hence the need for a search warrant. The peculiar information about those two letters is that one was from a lawyer to Bishop Fiorenza dated October 1992 discussing whether the diocese was legally obligated to report the incident to Children's Protective Services (CPS). Fiorenza's reply letter stated that he would require an additional psychological examination before LaRosa-Lopez was admitted to the seminary.

This was troubling on many levels. Obviously it was troubling because of the sexual abuse of the child by LaRosa-Lopez (known at that time as LaRosa). Also, the shocking letter from Fiorenza asking legal counsel if they were required to report the abuse to CPS was unsettling. I don't know Fiorenza well, but I grew up with him in this diocese and have heard about him my whole life in Houston. He is a close friend with a relative of mine, and I have socialized with him on many occasions in the past decade. Fiorenza

comes across as a no-nonsense Texan. The question that vexed me was why on earth would he equivocate on reporting the incident to CPS, let alone the police? LaRosa-Lopez at that time was not even a student at the diocesan-run St. Mary's Seminary. Why was LaRosa-Lopez even assisting at St. Thomas More church when he wasn't yet admitted to the seminary? LaRosa-Lopez didn't enter St. Mary's Seminary until spring 1993. Presumably he passed the psychological evaluation Fiorenza told the lawyer he would require.

The warrant contained more information about the other victims, but the details about the 1992 complaint intrigued me. I knew LaRosa-Lopez was a transfer student from a seminary in Mexico City because it was on his Facebook page that I viewed while he was in jail in September. Seminary students rarely transfer to another seminary unless they are dismissed for cause. This was certainly the case for LaRosa-Lopez. In 1993, he spent only one semester at St. Mary's Seminary in Houston before being transferred to Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corner, Wisconsin after having been credibly accused of molesting a sixth-grade boy. Why did Fiorenza allowed LaRosa-Lopez to enter St. Mary's Seminary to continue his path toward ordination? It only makes sense when we consider that the church doesn't conform to standards and practices of the secular world. The church has an operational manual in the Canon Laws. The bishops function on a different playing field. Society's standards and the local, state or federal laws do not trump their code of laws.

I have learned not to discuss Fiorenza's or DiNardo's actions with my relatives who are apologists. There is no point. They believe Fiorenza did not put up with any sort of sexual abuse in his diocese. The flaw in that argument is that he is portrayed as some sort of deterrent, like the death penalty. It's as if a pedophile would ignore his urges for fear of Fiorenza's reprisals. It is nonsense on all counts, least of which is that there was no reprisal for LaRosa-Lopez. After the first known complaint about him, Fiorenza admitted him to seminary in Houston, and then sent him to Wisconsin to finish his graduate degree. The tuition for that degree was paid for by the Diocese of Galveston-Houston. Thus Fiorenza not only tolerated sexual abuse in his Diocese, he rewarded it. When LaRosa-Lopez was ordained in December 1996, the diocese assigned him to Sacred Heart Church in Conroe where he started molesting boys and girls within two years.

FINALLY MAKING GOOD ON THEIR PROMISE: JANUARY 31, 2019

The clergy disclosure list for the ADGH named forty priests credibly accused of sexual abuse of minors from 1950 to 2018—notably, two

other priests were already under investigation. I have researched many of the priests on the disclosure list and have had to face the horrifying realizations that priests I knew personally committed these crimes. Moreover, Bishop Morkovsky, who confirmed me, was instrumental in covering up those crimes. One of the first priests I researched was Rev. Ivan Turic.

Although I had never heard of Turic, the archdiocese listed the parishes to which he was assigned and one was St. Mary Star of the Sea in Freeport, Texas about sixty miles south of Houston. I have a good friend who was from that same parish in Freeport. It was a long shot, but I called him just in case he remembered something about Turic. As fate would have it, my call interrupted a lunch he was having with a friend as they were discussing Rev. Turic, having seen his name on the list. My friend answered the phone and sounded almost scared. He said they did know Turic and they needed to call me to get information on him just when I called. *Said they*

Rev. Ivan Turic was in active ministry in Houston for less than ten years when a warrant was issued for his arrest for a felony charge of indecency with a child in May 1977. Ordained in May 1968, his career as a priest in Galveston-Houston was a debacle by any standard. He absconded from Houston when the warrant was issued, but the chaos he created manifested in Harris County Courts for the next thirty-six years.

1966–1968: TIME TO ORDINATION

Turic's time in the (then) Diocese of Galveston-Houston began shrouded in mystery. Two former parishioners at St. Mary Star of the Sea Catholic Church in Freeport, who spoke on condition of anonymity, knew Turic before he was ordained in 1968. Both remembered him well when he was in charge of the youth recreational center at the church. A local newspaper at the time ran a feature article on Turic describing his "heavy Austrian accent" and noted that he had been in the United States a little more than a year.⁵⁵ According to this account, Turic was a twenty-six-year-old seminary student at St. Mary Star of the Sea in Freeport who had already received his doctorate from the University of Vienna. However, there was no seminary at St. Mary Star of the Sea in Freeport. The seminary in the diocese then, and now, is St. Mary's Seminary (SMS), Houston. The same local newspaper published a front page photo⁵⁶ of Turic when he was ordained as transitional deacon, his last step before being ordained a priest in the Catholic Church.⁵⁷

AN UNUSUAL PATH TO ORDINATION

The *Texas Catholic Herald* reported that Bishop John L. Morkovsky ordained Turic to the priesthood on May 18, 1968. Very little detail was given about Turic in the article compared to the other priests whose histories included their elementary schools, high schools, parents' names, and when they entered the seminary. Turic's background was summed up in two sentences: "A native of Zupa, Austria, Father Turic studied at the University of Vienna and St. Mary's Seminary. He spent two years working in parishes of the Galveston-Houston diocese."⁵⁸ Although it was reported that Turic studied at St. Mary's Seminary, he is noticeably absent in the St. Mary's Seminary 1968 class photo the newspaper published. The three men in the class photo, Fr. Isidore Rozycki, Fr. Clifton Ransom, and Fr. Leonard Derden, were all ordained the same day as Turic, and were all featured in the same *Texas Catholic Herald* article.

The seminary program at that time required four years of undergraduate work leading to a bachelor's degree, and four years of graduate work for a master's degree, typically in theology.⁵⁹ Seminarians could enter the seminary after receiving a bachelor's degree elsewhere, but were required to take undergraduate theology coursework if they hadn't already done so. The St. Mary's Seminary academic catalogs from the 1960s list the Register of Students enrolled, both undergraduate and graduate students. Turic's name does not appear in the published register until the 1967–1968⁶⁰ catalog that lists him as a Theology IV Student, meaning he completed the four years of graduate theology work. Turic is not listed anywhere as an alumnus. It is possible he transferred to St. Mary's Seminary in 1966, but he was not listed as a student in any available documentation. Further, he is not included in any alumni lists of SMS and, of course, he is not in the class photo.

Also of note is the time between his ordination to the diaconate, and his ordination to the priesthood. Turic was ordained as a transitional deacon February 10, 1968, and barely three months later on May 18, 1968, he was ordained to the priesthood. A transitional deacon is the last phase of training for the Catholic priesthood. In 1968, the rules governing the time from diaconate to priesthood were defined in the 1917 Code of Canon Law.⁶¹ Formally known as the *Codex Iuris Canonici* (CIC) (1917), these laws were in place until 1983 when the church instituted a revised version. At the time Turic was ordained, CIC 978 §2 required that a candidate for the priesthood first pass through four steps known as minor orders before the major orders of subdeacon, deacon, and priest were conferred. CIC 978 §2 stipulated that there should be a minimum of three months from subdeacon to deacon, and three months from deacon to ordination as a priest.

There are no published accounts of Turic receiving or progressing through minor orders, or when (or if) he began his time as a subdeacon. We only know that his time from diaconate to priesthood was three months. And regardless of whether there was any irregularity with his timeline, like many laws in the church, there was a backdoor. The 1917 CIC 978 §2 states that diocesan bishops can waive the minimum time requirement in specific cases.⁶² Perhaps, Bishop John L. Morkovsky did just that when he ordained Turic on May 18, 1968, so soon after he ordained him a deacon in February.

1968–1971: SHORT-LIVED FIRST ASSIGNMENT FOLLOWED BY TWO YEARS ABSENT ON LEAVE

Turic's first assignment as a priest after ordination was at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Houston. *The Official Catholic Directory* (OCD)⁶³ from 1969 shows the following priests assigned to St. Vincent de Paul: Revs. J. D. Connelly, Robert E. Daigle, Ivan Turic, In Residence: Antonio J. Morales. Turic only spent one year at St. Vincent de Paul Church. He was listed in the OCD 1970⁶⁴ and 1971⁶⁵ as Absent With Leave [with permission]. Turic's first three years as a priest were comprised of only one year at a parish followed by two consecutive years of leave. This is what is known as a bad sign. Not only was Ivan Turic's entry into the priesthood unusual, his activities after his first year as a priest make him stand out from his child molesting peers on the list.

1972–1973: ONE YEAR ON, ONE YEAR OFF

In the OCD 1972,⁶⁶ Turic was no longer listed as Absent With Leave. He was assigned to St. Francis of Assisi Church on the opposite side of Houston from St. Vincent's. The parish had an elementary school run by the Sisters of Charity, with 279 students. Like his tenure at St. Vincent's, Turic only lasted one year at St. Francis of Assisi. The 1973 Galveston-Houston Catholic Directory⁶⁷ listing for Turic is: Leave of Absence. Curiously, although he was on a leave of absence in both the OCD 1973 and the Diocese of Galveston-Houston Directory, Turic was still active as a priest. In September 1973, Rev. Ivan Turic was the full-time chaplain at the newly established International Seaman Center.⁶⁸ Established in January 1973, the International Seaman Center at the Port of Houston (renamed Seafarer's Center) was spearheaded by Bishop John L. Morkovsky, according to his biographer, Dawn Orsak. The Port of Houston describes the center as a "home away from home for seafarers visiting the Port of Houston . . . established to provide a safe and welcoming recreational and spiritual environment on land for those who have

chosen the sea as their livelihood."⁶⁹ And who better to be full-time chaplain to thousands of international seamen far from home than a priest with only two years of experience who has been on a leave of absence for three years?

CANON LAW ON LEAVES OF ABSENCE

We do not know why Turic was on leave for three of his first five years of active ministry as a priest in Houston. In the "Impact of a Leave of Absence on a Cleric's Right to Remuneration," Canon lawyer Msgr. Jason A. Gray explained different scenarios under which the term "leave of absence" might be applied for a priest. "A cleric may voluntarily request a leave of absence or may be involuntarily placed on a leave of absence. The circumstances of the leave may also vary greatly." Those varied circumstances, Gray wrote, could be that the priest requested a leave of absence, "for personal reasons, to continue some sort pastoral formation . . . because of an illness or some other obstacle that prevents him from fulfilling his ministerial obligations . . . but is temporarily prevented from offering his service."⁷⁰ If a priest is put on an involuntary leave of absence, Gray explained that it could be due to an allegation of a crime against Canon Law, or because the bishop didn't give him an assignment for another reason. We don't know the details, but the short assignments and multiple leaves of absence indicate that there was a significant problem.

It was during Turic's third leave of absence in 1973, when he was full-time chaplain at the Seaman Center, that he began building his real estate portfolio. Harris County Clerk property records show that on July 26, 1973, Rev. Ivan Turic was the grantee of a warranty deed for a property he purchased in Houston: Clairmont Place, Section 2, Lot: L0793, Block: B0035. It was the first of seven properties he purchased in Houston.⁷¹

1974: ANOTHER PARISH, THE SEAMAN CENTER AND REAL ESTATE

In 1974, his sixth year as priest, Turic made it back into a parish, but with a caveat: he was listed as, *In Residence* at Our Lady of Fatima in Galena Park, Texas. There were 152 students at Our Lady of Fatima elementary school. And the OCD 1974⁷² noted, for the first time, his role at the Seaman Center, "Turic, Chap., Port of Houston." The term *In Residence* meant that he was not assigned to work at the parish, but was living in the rectory that was conveniently located only a few miles from the International Seaman Center and his job there as the full-time chaplain. The proximity of his residence at Our Lady

of Fatima to his assigned chaplaincy at the Seaman Center was apparently not an important factor to Turic because Harris County Clerk property records show that on June 14, 1974, Reverend Ivan Turic purchased properties #2 and #3 in Clairmont Place in Houston and began living in one of them. Harris County Appraisal District records show that the 8157 Laura Koppe home was a 770-square foot single-family home, built in 1946 and remodeled in 1960.⁷³

On August 24, 1974 Harris County Clerk property records show that Turic purchased property #4 in Clairmont Place: Sec: 1, Lot: L0331, Block: B0017.⁷⁴ Turic had purchased a total of four properties in his name between July 1973 and August 1974, and he wasn't done.

1975: LAST ASSOCIATION WITH A PARISH

In the OCD 1975 Turic was once again listed as *In Residence* at Our Lady of Fatima and Chaplain at the Port of Houston's International Seaman Center.⁷⁵ But on November 26, 1975, he purchased property #5 in Clairmont Place: Sec: 1, Lot: L0330, Block: B0017.⁷⁶ It was his seventh year as a priest, and his last to be assigned to a church in the Diocese of Galveston-Houston. For Turic, 1976 was the last year he was listed in the OCD with a specific assignment.⁷⁷ For reasons we do not know, he was no longer assigned to live at the rectory of Our Lady of Fatima. The OCD shows that he was assigned to the newly created Diocesan Office of Port Ministry, all of which seem highly unusual. Rev. Rivers Patout, who graduated from St. Mary's Seminary Houston the year before Turic in 1967, was listed first in the directory as assigned to Port Ministry. Turic is listed as the, "Co-ordinator" and "Chaplain of the International Seaman Center."⁷⁸

In March 1976, Harris County Clerk property records show that Turic purchased property #6 in Clairmont Place, Section 1, Lot: L0312, Block: B0015.⁷⁹ He then immediately took out a loan in the mount of \$2,500 with a 10 percent interest rate and monthly installments of \$219.79. The deed of trust for the promissory note was in the name of Phillip Johnson. Despite his chaplaincy work at the Seaman Center, Turic managed to expand his side job of flipping properties. On June 16, 1976, while living at his home on Laura Koppe Road, Turic sold the first property he had purchased back in 1973 for \$13,950.⁸⁰

1977: FINAL YEAR IN HOUSTON

Significantly, the OCD 1977⁸¹ doesn't list Turic at all. And yet he still qualified for yet another mortgage on January 27, 1977 when Harris

County Clerk property records show he purchased property #7 in the same area: Clairmont Place: Sec: 1, Lot: L0313, Block: B0015.⁸² Turic's career in buying and selling personal properties is not typical for a diocesan priest. When these atypical activities are viewed in light of Turic's specious seminary training, his inability to remain at a parish for more than one year, his three yearlong leaves of absence, and the fact that he is named by the archdiocese as a credibly accused sex abuser, what emerges is the profile of a sexual predator who cannot be managed or controlled by his bishop.

We might imagine that Turic's removal from his first assignment at St. Vincent de Paul Church was due to some misconduct because it was followed by two years classified as *Absent with Leave*. If that extended leave of absence was meant to remediate Turic, it is also likely that his bishop's attempt didn't work because Turic was removed after only one year from his next assignment at St. Francis of Assisi, and again placed on a leave of absence. We might infer from his assignment history that the diocese must have been aware that he was a problem because he was not assigned to ministry in a parish after St. Francis of Assisi. He was allowed to live at a parish that included an elementary school, but in 1977 even this residence status appears to have been revoked. When a problem priest can't be managed or controlled by his bishop, it can make it difficult for the bishop to manage the collateral damage created by the priest, especially if external agencies get involved. That is exactly what happened on May 17, 1977 when a boy and his father filed a police report against Turic for indecency with a child—a felony complaint.⁸³

On June 16, 1977, a grand jury indicted Turic. And on June 17, 1977, a warrant was issued for his arrest. His home address was indicated on the warrant—he had been living at his Laura Koppe home for three years. Turic must have had an inkling that the grand jury decision would not go his way because on June 9, 1977—only one week before they returned the indictment—he filed with the Harris County Clerk to give his Power of Attorney to a woman named Vida Virginia Dixon.⁸⁴ One of the reasons he may have given that Power of Attorney to Vida Dixon was so she could manage the sale of two of his properties after he had fled the jurisdiction. Harris County Clerk property records show that on February 13, 1978, Ivan Turic through authorized agent and attorney in fact, Vida Virginia Dixon, sold property number #6 for \$9,500, and again on April 10, 1978 with Vida Dixon acting as his agent, Turic sold property number #7. These two transactions occurred almost a year after the warrant had been issued for his arrest. It was still active, but wouldn't be for long.

CASE DISMISSED

Despite the courage of the boy and his father to go to the police, and the coordinated efforts of the Harris County Sheriff's Department, the District Attorney's Office and the grand jury to indict Turic, the case was dismissed on December 15, 1980.⁸⁵ The reason given on the case file at Harris County District Clerk's Office was that they could not locate Turic. That wasn't the last of Turic in Harris County though. Harris County District Courts made several attempts to locate Turic after he absconded in 1977, not for the felony indictment, but for tax delinquencies on the four properties that he still owned. Harris County District Clerk documents show that beginning in 1977 and continuing through 2014, the North Forest Independent School District, the City of Houston, and Harris County attempted to locate, serve, and collect the past due property taxes he owed.⁸⁶ Turic's chaos took up Harris County Court resources for almost forty years after he ran out on the warrant for his arrest. In September 2008, the tenacious attorneys representing the Harris County Tax Assessors Office located Turic in Croatia and served him notice of the lawsuit and final judgment for his tax delinquencies. They actually got a signature from Turic confirming that he received the notice in August 2009. Harris County sold Turic's four properties at auction to recover his property tax delinquencies that dated back to 1977.

Turic is still a priest in Croatia and listed as retired at a parish in Župa Biokovska.⁸⁷ Croatian journalist Hrvoje Šimičević obtained a document from Turic's file with the Yugoslav Secret Police dated January 5, 1978, stating that Turic had already been sent to work in the Archdiocese of Rosario in Santa Fe, Argentina directly from Houston.⁸⁸ The significance of this information is that the bishop at that time, John Morkovsky, would have contacted the bishop in Rosario to ask him to accept Turic as a priest. Morkovsky would have known when he transferred Turic that there was a warrant for his arrest for sexual assaulting a fourteen-year-old boy. So, the Bishop of Galveston-Houston interfered with the execution of justice and aided and abetted Turic to escape despite the warrant for his felony charge.

And what became of the victim who reported Turic to the police? According to public documents from the initial complaint and arrest warrant to criminal proceedings later in his life, he is serving a life sentence for murder at a Texas prison,⁸⁹ which is where Turic should be.

IN CONCLUSION

Unpacking the revelations of the past year has been an arduous task. I chose the example of Rev. Ivan Turic for this chapter because it is a microcosm

of the church's global conspiracy to cover up the crimes of clerics. This *modus operandi* is more or less the same in every case of credible accusations of sexual abuse by a priest. The Turic case shows the lengths the church will go to in order to protect one of its own, including obstructing justice in the legal system. It contains all the elements of a church cover-up from start to finish. First, there is the mystery surrounding his seminary education. The information I was able to gather from primary sources, such as the first-hand accounts by people who knew him prior to his ordination as well as newspaper articles, all point to a nontraditional education and an ordination that was fast-tracked by Bishop Morkovsky. Second, his spotty intermittent assignments at parishes that never lasted more than a year or two—all bookended by leaves of absence—indicate he caused problems at each parish necessitating his removal from all public ministry ultimately. Third, he was indicted for indecency with a child and evaded arrest. So how did a parish priest from Yugoslavia disappear from Houston in May 1978 when the police were looking for him? Did he just happen to get reassigned at that exact moment? Of course not, the bishop handled the legal problem by moving Turic out of the country so he wouldn't be arrested. The focus was on protecting the perpetrator in the name of protecting the reputation of the church.

As Bishop Morkovsky was busy coordinating the escape of Turic and securing him a parish assignment in Argentina and communicating with the Secret Police in communist Yugoslavia, he was also scheduled to preside over confirmation in the diocese—my confirmation in May 1978. I know now that while I was preparing for confirmation, committing myself to Christ and the Catholic Church and excited to have the bishop confirm me, the bishop was aiding in the escape of the priest who sexually assaulted a fourteen-year-old boy. It dilutes the solemnity of the sacrament of confirmation for me and it adds an air of deceit and disgust for me as I look back on that day. The question that stays with me is: how could the bishop appear so pious and holy to me, and also assist someone evading justice when he knew Turic was a sexual predator?

The salient lesson is twofold. First, the cardinals and bishops do not tell the truth, at least not as the rest of the world defines truth. Second, the ordained clergy are members of a very codified and fiercely guarded fraternity. They protect each other before they protect the faithful. To that end, when the church deals with a priest accused of sexual abuse, the pattern and practice of the church has been to transfer the priest to another parish where his past is not disclosed. And we know from investigations around the country that those priests typically continued sexually abusing minors at their newly assigned parishes. A priest I know casually explained to me that the secrecy is all about protecting *la bella figura*, an Italian phrase that translates to "good

image.” Protecting the image of the church is the number one tenet above all else when dealing with allegations of sexual abuse by its clergy, not the protection of minors.

The reports from around the country show the consistent pattern and practice of indiscriminate transfers of the sex offender priests. There is no single city that is a dumping ground because every city has been a potential dumping ground. I have spent countless hours trying to discern a pattern to the transfers of credibly accused priests and cannot identify one.

The revelations of the last eighteen months have irrevocably changed the image of the church when the world learned conclusively that the church has lied about the sexual abuse problem for decades. Many Catholics describe an erosion of trust in the church across the board, not just about sexual abuse. If the bishops lied to protect child rapists, what else have they lied about? Did they teach us something in catechism that is a lie?

The motive of the bishops might have been to protect *la bella figura* of the church, but the unintended result is that many Catholics now question their faith after the public disclosures of the sexual abuse and the cover-ups. It is an institutional betrayal and it is not just an American phenomenon. The church has betrayed all Catholics.

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"This superb collection of essays provides Catholics with a series of high-powered lenses for examining the monolith of clerical corruption that has thwarted Gospel justice in the twenty-first century. Moving us deeper into the root causes behind today's painful headlines, contributors not only demonstrate the power of feminist analyses in exposing the long arc of misogyny and sexism, they also unflinchingly expose prelates who cover up crimes and they illuminate the power of the #MeToo movement to shift the narrative and expose the lackadaisical reporting by media outlets on the abuse of women religious in recent years. Overall, these contributors remind us that muscular correctives are available and being engaged against a rotting clericalist system. They illuminate critical remedies for holding Catholic clerics accountable, establishing full equality for women, and transforming hierarchical concepts of authority, power, and gender in order to carry out the work of the Gospel for today's world." —**DEBORAH ROSE-MILAVEC**, co-director of *Future Church*

Crisis and Challenge in the Roman Catholic Church: Perspectives on Decline and Reformation explores the historical, theological, sociological, and ethical dimensions of the current issues threatening the two-thousand-year-old Roman Catholic Church. The interdisciplinary analysis contained within this volume exposes the destructive convictions and actions of the Roman Catholic clergy that have produced the current institutional crisis while suggesting options for moving forward. Documenting cases that constitute the many crises currently surrounding Catholicism, this volume aims to provide clarity and conscience. At the same time, with a constructive vision of an ethics and religious practice rooted in integrity and transparency, the contributors offer a path towards holistic and holy reformation by and for Catholics.

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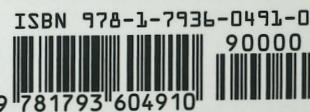
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and Mary Sue Barnett

