

Diocese Of Galveston-Houston Demands Wanderer's Retraction

Editor's note: The Diocese of Galveston-Houston has issued a sharp denunciation of two recent reports published on page one in the June 17th, 1999 issue of *The Wanderer*. One report, written by *Wanderer* news editor Paul Likoudis was titled "Lawsuits: Names NCCB President For Protecting Alleged Pedophile"; the other, written by *Wanderer* contributing editor Thomas Droleskey was titled "Firing Of Award Winning Editor Accompanied By Harassment."

Following is the complete text of the statement issued June 16th, 1999 by diocesan communications director Annette Gonzales Taylor; the response by Paul Likoudis to the criticisms of his report; and finally, the response by Thomas Droleskey to criticisms of his report in the diocesan statement as well as to those listed in a more detailed rebuttal issued separately by Annette Gonzales Taylor.

HOUSTON — The bishop of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston denies allegations in two articles in the June 17th issue of *The Wanderer*. Most Rev. Joseph Fiorenza says accusations made in the articles involving him are total fabrications. The bishop also states he and his staff are disturbed and disappointed that the diocese was not given an adequate opportunity to respond to one of the articles and no chance at all to respond to the other.

One of the articles concerns a lawsuit alleging that Bishop Fiorenza protected a known pedophile. The article claims that "while Fiorenza was bishop of San Angelo, he incardinated Fr. David Holley even though he knew Holley was a perpetrator." The facts are that Fr. Holley was never incardinated in the Diocese of San Angelo. The bishop says he knew of no sexual record and that there were no allegations against the priest while he served in San Angelo. Most importantly, Bishop Fiorenza immediately dismissed Holley after he learned that pornography had been found in the priest's car while Holley was visiting San Antonio.

Accusations that Bishop Fiorenza has a history of assigning well-known perpetrators in dioceses where he has worked are false and defamatory.

Bishop Fiorenza adds that an article about the firing of the former editor of *The Texas Catholic Herald* is also riddled with inaccuracies and complete lies. The diocese has filed felony theft charges against Jacqueline Srouji, the former editor, after an internal audit and a police investigation uncovered theft and other financial irregularities.

Robert Scamardo, general counsel to the diocese, calls Srouji's accusations "a classic subterfuge." Scamardo says "this is an attempt to refocus attention from her own misdeeds."

Both articles mentioned above are replete with malicious lies and deceptive factual errors. Consequently, the Diocese of Galveston-Houston is demanding a retraction.

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Bishop's Letters Show That He Knew About Abuser

Documents obtained by *The Wanderer* refute denials made by Bishop Joseph Fiorenza, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, that he never allowed known clerical pedophiles to function in the Diocese of San Angelo while he was ordinary there.

Following the *Wanderer's* report on a lawsuit involving Fr. Dennis Peterson filed against Bishop Fiorenza and the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, which said Fiorenza had a history of assigning known pedophiles, the diocese issued a statement describing the charge as "false and defamatory."

In a June 16th, 1999, news release issued by the Diocese of Houston, Bishop Fiorenza "says he knew of no sexual record and that there were no allegations against the priest [Fr. David Holley] while he served in San Angelo."

According to published news reports, court documents, and let-

ters written to and from Bishop Fiorenza obtained by *The Wanderer*, Fiorenza knew for several years that a priest working in the Diocese of San Angelo, David Holley, had sexually abused minor males and that recurrences of "his past problems" finally prompted Fiorenza to expel Holley in 1984.

Holley began serving in the Diocese of San Angelo in 1977, two years before Fiorenza arrived, after being expelled from numerous dioceses and undergoing treatment at least three times at different centers for his sexual problems.

In May 1977, Holley was expelled from the Diocese of El Paso. Bishop Sidney Metzger wrote Holley: "... I have come to the painful decision that you will no longer be permitted to function as a priest in the Diocese of El Paso. ... We do not intend to pass judgment on you or your actions, realizing that many past events have had an impact on your life. It is my suggestion that you remain with your family and seek employment as a layman."

Setting Up In San Angelo

Four months later Metzger wrote to Bishop Steven Leven of San Angelo, who had sent Holley for treatment to Southdown in Ontario, that "you and I also know from our experience with such unfortunate matters that such cases are always a calculated risk."

In 1982, with Holley functioning as a priest in the diocese, Fiorenza wrote to Bishop Bernard Flanagan of Worcester, Holley's ordinary, that he knew of Holley's "past difficulties" but that "with our priest shortage, I am willing to risk incardinating him."

Holley, as the Diocese of Houston's press release states, "was never incardinated in the Diocese of San Angelo," which *The Wanderer* mistakenly assumed; but Holley did function as a priest at several parishes in the diocese with Fiorenza's permission — and probably without parishioners having any idea of his canonical status.

In a June 2nd, 1982 letter to Flanagan, Fiorenza wrote:

"I am grateful for your letter concerning Fr. David Holley. He has been working in the Diocese of San Angelo for four years and, as far as I know, there has been no serious problem with his ministry here. I am aware of some of his past difficulties yet I do not know the extent of his problems.

"With our shortage of priests, I am willing to risk incardinating him unless you would advise me against it, since you know him far better than I do. During my time as bishop here, he has not given me any serious reason not to accept him into the diocese. If I do incardinate him, I will urge him to continue some sort of therapy in order to guard against a relapse.

"He is very sensitive about his past and becomes most emotional in talking about it or if he thinks any of the priests are too inquisitive about his past ministry before coming to West Texas. . . ."

Less than two weeks later, on June 14th, 1982, Bishop Flanagan sent a letter to Holley formally excardinating him from the Diocese of Worcester:

"... I write to inform you that, since it is apparent that there is a greater need for your services in that diocese for the good of souls, I hereby excardinate you by this letter permanently and unconditionally according to canon #112

that you may be incardinated in the Diocese of San Angelo.

"Your excardination will take effect upon your receiving letters of incardination from the bishop of the Diocese of San Angelo. . . ."

Six months later, on Dec. 22nd, 1982, Fiorenza wrote to Flanagan to advise him that Holley had relapsed and he had no plans to incardinate him, but that he would give him a "fair chance":

"Dear Bishop Flanagan:
"In June you were kind enough to issue a letter of excardination for Fr. David Holley. Since that time some of his past problems surfaced again which made it advisable for me not to incardinate him. In fact, at this time I have no plans to incardinate him. I communicated this to him last October. He understands completely my position on his incardination.

"For the past several months Fr. Holley has been studying Spanish in San Antonio and Mexico in order to more efficiently minister to the people of this diocese. I have made it clear to him that I will give him a fair chance to exercise his priesthood here, but if there is one more lapse I will ask him to leave. This, too, he fully understands. . . ."

On May 25th, 1984, Fiorenza wrote to the new bishop of Worcester, Timothy Harrington:

"Dear Bishop Harrington:
"One of your priests, Fr. David Holley, has been working in the Diocese of San Angelo for the past several years. During this period of time on a few occasions his past problems surfaced. On Dec. 22nd, 1982, I informed Bishop Flanagan that I would give Fr. Holley one more chance. It is with regret that I write now to say that Fr. Holley has made it impossible for us to keep him in this diocese. . . . As a small missionary diocese we are unable to continue our association with him. . . ."

One month later, Fiorenza advised Harrington that Holley was living at a parish in the Diocese of Amarillo, but had already been told by Bishop Leroy Matthiesen that he could not be incardinated in Amarillo.

On August 13th, 1984, Fr. Holley wrote to Bishop Flanagan to inform him that "I am now working at St. Joseph Church [in Amarillo]. My plans are to remain in this diocese and, God willing, to be incardinated."

A Sad Case

Holley, born in 1928 in Pennsylvania, was ordained a Benedictine priest in 1958. His first assignment was in Reading, Pa., where he was unable to get along with the other priests, and so he applied to Bishop Flanagan to be incardinated in the Worcester Diocese in May 1962.

In 1962, according to a deposition filed by Holley obtained by *The Wanderer*, Holley's "psychosexual disorder began to manifest itself," though medical reports indicate his homosexual problems and addiction to pornography began at age 20 while serving in the U.S. Navy.

According to Holley's own deposition filed for his 1992 lawsuit:

"Before I became officially incardinated to the Diocese of Worcester, Bishop Flanagan had received reports that I had sexually molested boys in the above-referenced [three parishes: St. Philip's in Grafton, St. Mary of the Hills in Boylston, and Our Lady of Fatima in Worcester]. On at least two occasions, Bishop Flanagan called me in to discuss the allegations, cautioned me against causing scandal in the Church, but he expressed no comments about my victims."

In 1968, Flanagan sent Holley to priest-psychiatrist Fr. Jerome Hayden for treatment; and assigned Holley to be associate pastor at St. Anne's Parish in Southboro. In 1969, Flanagan sent Holley for treatment of his psychosexual disorder to Seton Psychiatric Institute in Baltimore.

In December 1970, he was discharged, had his faculties restored, but was refused an assignment by Flanagan, who then began trying to find a place for Holley in a different diocese. Holley was rejected by Boston and Wilmington, Del.

In March 1971, Flanagan sent Holley to the Servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico, where he was placed in a house in Albuquerque where he worked as a priest for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. According to his deposition, "I participated in no therapy or treatment programs offered by the Paracletes. . . . Additionally, I believe Paracletes obtained faculties for me from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe since I performed all the holy sacraments in these Albuquerque churches. . . ."

In 1972, Holley was posted to Alamogordo, where he remained until 1977 when he moved to San Angelo and began efforts to become incardinated there.

According to *Wanderer* sources in Texas, Holley, now 72, received his 275-year prison sentence in 1993 for abusing "hundreds of boys" while stationed in New Mexico, though the civil lawsuit filed against him was brought by only 16 of his victims. Unconfirmed reports from reliable sources indicate that the Diocese of San Angelo settled several claims against Holley while Fiorenza was bishop, though all records remain sealed.

How Could Holley Happen?

Apart from Fiorenza's unfortunate involvement in the case of Fr. Holley, Holley seems to signify an ecclesial "meltdown."

To begin with, why were the Benedictines in Pennsylvania unable to discern that the troubled young man who applied to be a Benedictine priest — who had manifested effeminate traits, had homosexual experiences, and had already become addicted to pornography — should not be ordained a priest?

What does this say about the Benedictine formation process?

Secondly, why would Bishop Bernard Flanagan incardinate a known child abuser in his diocese, and continue to reassign Holley to parishes even though he knew of his compulsive addiction to both pornography and sexual experiences with young males?

Third: Why did Church authorities fail to return Holley to the lay state when they knew that that's where he belonged?

In a 1970 letter, the late Bishop Timothy Harrington, then an auxiliary bishop in Worcester under Flanagan, wrote to Dr. Louis Cleary, clinical director of the Seton Psychiatric Center in Baltimore, that "Bishop Flanagan and I have had such serious doubts about Father continuing in his priesthood that, at one time, it was suggested that he seek a dispensation and return to the lay state. . . ."

"People have been so greatly disturbed by his behavior that we would wonder whether he can avoid his reputation going before him in any area of this compact diocese. We also question whether we can chance the possibility of his having another relapse."

Fourth: When bishops talk about "calculated risks," they are speaking falsely: They are not the ones exposed to the real risk. The ones whose lives are put in jeopardy, who are really at risk, are the families and young people put at the disposal of these predators.

Fifth: The Holley case illustrates the refusal of the Catholic hierarchy to understand that pedophiles are not curable and, if clerical pedophiles have a claim on the Church, they should be permanently isolated from the Catholic community and confined to maintenance centers for the rest of their lives.

Sixth: Most unfortunately, the Holley case provides an insight into the episcopal mindset that Catholic lay people and families are not to be respected or in any significant way included in problems of this sort. Not to inform the laity that a problem priest is coming into their parish shows a profound disrespect for the laity, especially families of children.

Other Cases

In an August 1993 report in *The Dallas Morning News* about Fr. Holley and the bishops who allowed him to work for them, reporter Brooks Egerton wrote: "Fr. Holley isn't the only child molester whom Bishop Fiorenza has allowed to continue working," and cited a Houston case in 1985 where Fiorenza reassigned a priest who had sexually abused a young girl and pressured the victim's parents not to tell police.

The Wanderer asked the *Morning News* if Bishop Fiorenza had lodged a complaint that such a claim was "false and defamatory."

The editors at the *Morning News* provided this statement to *The Wanderer*: "Bishop Fiorenza declined to be interviewed for the report, and he has never approached them to take issue with this newspaper's report."

— Paul Likoudis
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