

Memorandum Regarding Reverend Robert M. Burns (Youngstown, Ohio)  
Prepared at the Archdiocese of Boston and Submitted to the Holy See by Bernard Cardinal Law  
May, 1999

Name: Reverend Robert M. Burns  
Born: March 25, 1949  
Ordained: June 7, 1975

Assignments: 12-01-82 - 7/01/86 Part-Time Parochial Vicar  
St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Jamaica Plain (Boston), Massachusetts  
7/01/86 - 3/22/91 Part-Time Parochial Vicar  
St. Mary, Charlestown (Boston), Massachusetts

History of Placement Within the Archdiocese of Boston:

In 1982, Most Reverend James W. Malone, Bishop of Youngstown, Ohio, requested of Cardinal Humberto Medeiros that Reverend Robert M. Burns be granted a place of residence in a parish of the Archdiocese of Boston while pursuing higher studies at Boston College. At the time of the request, Father Burns was undergoing a period of residential treatment at the House of Affirmation in Hopedale, Massachusetts. The purpose was to treat incidents of and a proclivity towards sexual activity with boys.

The October 27, 1982 report from the House of Affirmation to Reverend Gilbert Phinn, Director of the Office of Clergy Personnel (copy attached), clearly stated that Father Burns ought not receive an assignment that placed him in a position to minister to minors. Through a misjudgment of the severity of his past behavior and the likelihood of its recurrence, Father Burns received the full faculties of the Archdiocese and was twice assigned as Part-Time Parochial Vicar to parishes within the City of Boston. Neither of the Pastors with whom he was assigned was informed of a need to restrict Father Burns' ministry with children.

Record of Complaints and Response:

- 03/91 - first complaint received against Fr. Burns of sexual molestation of a boy within the Archdiocese of Boston; in response the assignment to St Mary's Parish in Charlestown is ended immediately
- 10/91 - second complaint received of sexual molestation of a boy by Father Burns
- 08/92 - settlement out of court with first complainant: \$825,000
- 08/94 - settlement out of court with second complainant: \$900,000
- 03/95 - Father Burns arrested in New Hampshire on charges of sexually molesting a twelve year old boy
- 07/95 - third complaint received of sexual molestation of a boy by Fr Burns [REDACTED]
- 03/96 - Father Burns is convicted of sexual abuse of a minor and incarcerated
- 03/96 - fourth complaint received of sexual molestation of a boy by Fr Burns [REDACTED]
- 10/98 - fifth complaint received of sexual molestation of a boy by Fr Burns [REDACTED]
- 01/99 - settlement out of court with fourth complainant: \$500,000
- 03/99 - sixth complaint received of sexual molestation of a boy by Fr Burns [REDACTED]

Summary and Recommendation

During his eight year presence within the Archdiocese of Boston, Reverend Robert Burns is alleged to have sexually molested six young men. This propensity was known to officials within the Archdiocese of Boston, but overlooked in favor of Father Burns solemn assurance of his ability to control his impulses. The subsequent misconduct indicates the incorrigible nature of Father Burns' condition. To dispense this man from obligations to priesthood would help the Church to avoid further problems from him in the future. It would also assist the Church in restoring trust in her clergy.

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