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**What Did the Bishop Know, And When?**

By Kathleen A. Shaw and Richard Nangle
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Worcester, MA - With seven priests placed on administrative leave in 2002 and a host of others removed in years past, it is clear that the scourge of priestly sexual abuse has hit the Catholic Diocese of Worcester as hard as any diocese in the country.

What is less clear is where Bishop Daniel P. Reilly fits in the list of high-ranking church officials who have reassigned, rather than removed, accused priests.

Bishop Reilly has denied ever knowingly transferring a priest amid allegations of sexual abuse, but he faces a number of allegations that suggest otherwise.

He clearly knew of allegations against at least one priest he reassigned in Central Massachusetts. And there is evidence to suggest he knew of other allegations, going back nearly three decades before his 1994 assignment to head the Worcester Diocese.

To the east, the evidence in several cases of abuse by priests indicates that Cardinal Bernard F. Law knew of allegations against some of his priests in the Boston Archdiocese and allowed them to continue working. The evidence has mounted to the point where many Catholics, including high-profile ones such as gubernatorial candidate Warren E. Tolman, have called for his resignation.

Bishop Reilly has not faced anywhere near that kind of pressure.

And that could be partly because most of the evidence of his knowledge of accusations of sexual abuse against his priests hearkens back to his days in the hierarchy of the Providence Diocese in the 1960s and 1970s and his time as bishop in Norwich, Conn., from 1975 to 1994. Nevertheless, early on in his tenure in Worcester, Bishop Reilly signed off on a $300,000 lawsuit settlement with a Spencer man who accused the Rev. Peter Inzerillo and one other priest of sexual abuse. Rev. Inzerillo was on administrative leave at the time of the settlement, having been removed from his duties by Bishop Reilly's predecessor, Bishop Timothy Harrington.

In 2000, however, Bishop Reilly reassigned Rev. Inzerillo to St. Leo Church and St. Leo Elementary School in Leominster. But earlier this year, after the priest abuse scandal reignited in Boston and some parishioners and parents of schoolchildren complained, Bishop Reilly relented and placed Rev. Inzerillo back on administrative leave.

Bishop Reilly also signed a confidentiality agreement in the case of a Northbridge man who said that when he was 9 he was sexually abused by the Rev. Thomas A. Kane of the former House of Affirmation in Whitinsville. The sealed agreement includes the names of three priests who are not named in the complaint. Houston-based lawyer Daniel J. Shea, who has been handling some local sexual abuse cases, says the three must have been involved in a child sex ring.

Meanwhile, new charges continue to date to Bishop Reilly's years in Connecticut.

Last month, he was named in a civil suit alleging that he allowed the **Rev. Bruno Primavera** to remain in parish work despite a history of child molestation.

The Primavera lawsuit was filed on behalf of a Portland, Maine, man by New London, Conn., lawyer Robert Reardon. He said Bishop Reilly must have known about Rev. Primavera's history of sexual

abuse of minors because he sent him to a New Mexico treatment center for priests with sexual problems.

After the treatment, Bishop Reilly reassigned Rev. Primavera to a church where he met and allegedly sexually abused the plaintiff, who was 14 at the time, beginning in 1977, according to the lawsuit.

The alleged sexual abuse went on for two years and included kissing the boy on the lips, touching and fondling his genitals, performing oral sex, masturbation and "other similar acts of sexual assault and exploitation," according to the lawsuit. These acts allegedly happened at the church or on other diocesan property.

The suit faults the bishop, diocese and parish for not properly evaluating Rev. Primavera's fitness to serve in a parish, for failing to inform parishioners of Rev. Primavera's past treatment in New Mexico and for failing to report to civil authorities reasonable suspicions that Rev. Primavera was molesting children.

The bishop and diocese are also faulted in the suit for not having adequate policies and procedures that would bar priests from bringing children into private rooms and apartments in the rectories and taking children on trips when the defendants knew, or should have known, Rev. Primavera's history.

In July, another Connecticut priest abuse case that implicates Bishop Reilly was cleared for a jury trial.

The lawsuit alleges that former diocesan priest the Rev. **Richard T. Buongirno** of St. Matthias Church in East Lyme, Conn., sexually abused an altar boy on several occasions, from age 9 until high school. It is one of the more recent cases involving Bishop Reilly, in that it was alleged that the abuse continued until 1998.

Mr. Reardon, who is also handling that case, said Bishop Reilly was notified of an investigation into Rev. Buongirno's actions in 1991, but claimed it was a "false alarm."

In 1991, Connecticut's Department of Children and Youth Services received an anonymous phone call about the priest's relationship with the boy, according to Mr. Reardon. The agency's investigation concluded that Rev. Buongirno had not molested Mr. Doe. Still, the boy's mother prohibited him from seeing the priest.

Joseph T. Sweeney, representing the Norwich Diocese, said Bishop Reilly received a psychological evaluation of Rev. Buongirno that gave him a clean bill of health with regard to sexual issues.

But the suit alleges that a Massachusetts man told Bishop Reilly that before becoming a priest, Rev. Buongirno sexually abused him repeatedly over the course of three years in the 1970s, beginning when he was a 16-year-old student at St. Thomas More School, where Rev. Buongirno was a teacher.

Rev. Buongirno admitted to molesting the boy and was treated at the Institute of Living in Hartford, according to the lawsuit, which says diocesan officials did not tell doctors there that Rev. Buongirno also had been investigated for allegedly molesting Mr. Doe three years beforehand.

Mr. Reardon said Rev. Buongirno later was reassigned to another parish, where he was found with a boy in his room, then was reassigned again, and again was found with a boy in his room.

Bishop Reilly has said Rev. Buongirno was not reassigned to a parish until after the bishop left the Norwich Diocese for Worcester. But while Norwich Superior Court Judge Ian McLachlan released current Norwich Bishop Daniel A. Hart from the lawsuit, because he was serving as an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Boston when the sexual abuse allegedly occurred, Bishop Reilly remains a defendant. A jury trial could begin as early as next year.

The judge wrote, "The incidents involving Buongirno could be found by a jury to be sufficient to raise a suspicion that Buongirno was a pedophile ... who posed a threat to children in the diocese. Whether the Diocesan Corporation failed to take sufficient steps to prevent further harm to the plaintiff is a

question of fact."

Bishop Hart removed Rev. Buongirno from all priestly duties in 1998. Rev. Buongirno has testified that he never had sexual contact with the plaintiff.

Another suit against the Norwich Diocese was brought by a New Mexico man who alleged he was sexually molested by the Rev. **Bernard W. Bissonnette**, a longtime priest in the diocese. Rev. Bissonnette had been sent to a treatment center in Jemez, N.M., operated by a Catholic religious order called The Servants of the Paraclete, which works with priests suspected of being pedophiles or suffering from addictions and other afflictions.

Rev. Bissonnette has been accused of molesting several youngsters in New Mexico.

Bishop Reilly admits he spoke with Thomas Deary about his allegations of sexual abuse at the hands of Rev. Bissonnette. Mr. Deary later committed suicide.

A year after his brother's death, Gene Michael Deary of Brooklyn, Conn., asked Bishop Reilly where Rev. Bissonnette was and asked that he be removed from the diocesan priesthood. "We got nothing," Mr. Deary said.

Bishop Reilly says he knew at the time that Rev. Bissonnette had been sent to New Mexico for treatment and also was aware the priest had left the center. But, he insisted, he did not know where the priest was living.

Rev. Bissonnette had been receiving a monthly check from the Norwich Diocese. The bishop said he did not know where the money was sent, noting that it "could have been a post office box." Church law requires that a diocese provide for its priests in need.

Mr. Deary hired a private detective and tracked Rev. Bissonette to a rural residence in Belen, N.M. He flew his family out to New Mexico and visited the priest, who admitted molesting his brother. Rev. Bissonette was living with a family with small children, a fact that so disturbed Mr. Deary that he decided to inform local authorities and chancery officials.

In March 1993, Mr. Deary returned to Connecticut and told Bishop Reilly what had transpired and relayed to him past complaints of sexual misconduct. He said the bishop refused to take any action. Shortly afterward, Bishop Reilly moved on to take over the Worcester Diocese.

Rhode Island court documents show deposition testimony suggesting that then-Monsignor Reilly was told in 1967 about a sexual relationship involving Monsignor Louis Dunn and a Kingston, R.I., girl. The priest was accused of plying the girl with drugs and alcohol, accompanying her in sex orgies and of forcing her to have a medical procedure. Monsignor Dunn is now deceased.

While he was a monsignor, Reilly served as assistant chancellor, chancellor and interim administrator in the Providence Diocese, before being named bishop of the Norwich Diocese. He is named in 18 of 39 pending priest abuse lawsuits in Rhode Island. A Rhode Island Superior Court judge has ordered the Providence Diocese to open its records on allegations of priest sexual misconduct. The records have yet to be released.

The girl's father, Thomas Moriarty, testified that Monsignor Reilly's response was to question what he could do about it, but that he later transferred Monsignor Dunn from his Kingston parish to one in Providence. Mr. Moriarty testified that Monsignor Reilly told him he thought he had taken care of the problem. But he also said he had a difficult time getting Monsignor Reilly to agree to meet with him in the first place. He said he eventually forced the issue by driving to diocesan headquarters and demanding a meeting.

In another case, Bishop Reilly received a letter in June 1970 from Dr. Domenic L. Coppolino, a Providence psychiatrist, warning the diocese that the Rev. **Robert Marcantonio** had been sexually involved with a number of boys, ages 12 to 14. At least three children allege they were molested after

the date of the letter and have filed suit against the Providence Diocese.

One of Rev. Marcantonio's accusers alleges the priest had been sexually involved with more than two dozen boys for several years before 1970.

Later that year, a priest at Iowa State University wrote Bishop Reilly suggesting that Rev. Marcantonio be allowed to enroll at the school and undergo psychotherapy.

According to the lawsuit, the Rev. Bernard Duval, also a psychiatrist, wrote that while "you may raise your eyebrows at his working with students, keep in mind that one cannot be treated in a vacuum."

On July 7, 1971, Chancellor Reilly wrote to a monsignor in Iowa thanking him for the hospitality shown to "one of our priests, Father Robert Marcantonio, on the occasions of his visits to Father Duval."

The lawsuit states Rev. Marcantonio earned master's and doctoral degrees in psychology from Iowa State, obtained certification in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, then returned to Rhode Island in 1975. Afterward, he was accused of molesting several more boys at a Cumberland, R.I., parish. Bishop Reilly says he was already in Norwich when Rev. Marcantonio returned.

This year, Bishop Reilly has removed seven active priests after allegations of sexual misconduct. Accusations, and in some cases criminal charges, have been made against more than 20 other priests of the Worcester Diocese in the last 10 years.

Most recently, the scandal has taken root in the battle between those who accuse the Rev. Joseph A. Coonan of molesting them during the 1970s when he was in Oxford and a large group of supporters from St. John Parish in Worcester.

The church grounds at Temple Street sport signs and green ribbons in support of Rev. Coonan. Some of the alleged victims say that 15 men have made statements to state police that Rev. Coonan sexually abused them when he was a teacher at Oxford High School and camp counselor in Oxford in the 1970s.

Previous pastors who were removed have gotten support from their parishes, but the St. John group has gone above and beyond any other local effort.

Still, some cracks in that unity have begun to appear within the last week, as loyal parishioners began speaking in terms of saving their parish.

John R. Sharry, a former Worcester County commissioner and a leader in the support movement for Rev. Coonan, conceded that it was hard to discount what the alleged victims were saying.

The nature of the charges against Rev. Coonan seems to place him in a gray area, because they involve his manipulating teen-age boys into urinating, defecating and masturbating while he watched. Some allegations of sexual contact were made, but not in all cases. In addition, all of the allegations predate his 1989 entry into the priesthood.

The popular priest, who was voted "Best Clergy" in the Worcester Magazine's annual Best of Worcester poll, has spoken only through his lawyer, Joseph Early Jr. He has denied all the charges.

Todd Hammond of Oxford, who earlier accused Rev. Coonan of abusing him, said phone calls and e-mail messages continue to come in, with even more people coming forward to tell stories.

The St. John parishioners include some prominent area people, including Worcester School Committee member Kate Toomey, who serves on the Support Committee for the former pastor. They launched a Web site, www.FatherCoonan.com, and intend to push to get him reinstated in his parish. No matter that the new national sexual abuse policy is removal for one incident "past, present or future" -- they are crying foul.

Mr. Hammond said it pains him to see people backing a priest where the evidence appears

overwhelming. "These are all different people, of different ages, from different communities, and they are all telling the same story," he said.

Parishioners have been critical of Bishop Reilly, saying he had the discretion not to remove Rev. Coonan. And they say they miss Rev. Coonan's sermons, accented with popular music.

For Mr. Hammond, however, the memories are of psychological manipulation by a teacher well versed in psychology.

Abuse of children by clergy takes its toll on entire families, according to Raymond and Dolores Desrosiers of Southbridge. Their daughter Cyndi won a judgment in Worcester Superior Court against the Rev. Robert E. Kelley, who she said began molesting her at age 4.

"We still go to church, but we wonder why we are there," Mr. Desrosiers said. A lifelong Catholic, he said he cannot look at any clergy and not think "What are you doing?" He admitted it is awful to think that way because the majority of clergy are not child abusers.

A priest of the diocese who is now dead once cautioned the Desrosiers family to "listen to the message and not the messenger."

Mrs. Desrosiers said what she found most difficult to bear was the lying by diocesan officials. The family attended the deposition of the late Monsignor Raymond Page in their daughter's civil suit. "He assured us that he knew nothing about what happened to Cyndi," Mrs. Desrosiers said. The family was shocked recently to read a newspaper story about Jane Martin, who now lives in the Springfield area, including allegations in her civil suit against the diocese that after Rev. Kelley began abusing her she went to Monsignor Page to report the abuse. According to the suit, he dismissed her story as the "ranting" of a child.

Mr. and Mrs. Desrosiers said if the church is ever to regain the trust of the people, church leaders must stop lying, face up to the abuse scandal and remove priests who abuse youngsters.

Allegations of sexual abuse in the Worcester Diocese go back to its beginnings in the 1950s.

The latest wave of priest removals began in March with removal of the Rev. John Bagley as pastor of St. Mary's parish in Grafton. Many of the pastor's supporters complained that the alleged rape of a 17-year-old boy happened in 1967, too long ago to be cause for removal.

Allegations soon followed against the Rev. Gerard Walsh, a chaplain for the Massachusetts State Police; the Rev. Lee F. Bartlett, who also served on the Worcester Redevelopment Authority; the Rev. Chester Devlin, pastor of St. Bernadette Parish in Northboro and the diocesan pro-life director; the Rev. Raymond Messier, who was pastor of two parishes in Athol and Petersham; and Rev. Inzerillo.

The settlement agreement involving Rev. Kane contained another agreement absolving from liability the Rev. Thomas A. Shauris, a priest who had been on leave from the diocese for several years, Monsignor Brendan J. Riordan of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, N.Y., who had been connected with the House of Affirmation, and the Rev. Thomas Teczar.

An analysis of which priests accused of misconduct were assigned to the 126 parishes of the diocese shows that these priests appear to be concentrated in certain areas. The reasons for that are unclear.

Philip A. Saviano, formerly of East Douglas, said he has no explanation why the largest number of priests accused of abuse were assigned to St. Mary in Uxbridge. "Look one town over to Douglas, and you will find only one, and that was the one who abused me," he said. Mr. Saviano received a small settlement from the Worcester Diocese after he sued, claiming abuse by the Rev. David A. Holley in the 1960s. Rev. Holley is now serving a 275-year jail term in New Mexico for molesting children there.

Mr. Saviano said there might be some speculation that these priests operated in mill towns where people were less likely to complain, but that doesn't seem reasonable either. "Uxbridge was a mill

town, but it was pretty well developed," he said.

Many of the priests who were accused of sexual misconduct faced accusations emanating from more than one parish assignment. A review of Telegram & Gazette files resulted in the following list of parishes and the number of accusations related to them:

Worcester: St. Paul's Cathedral, four; Ascension, one; Blessed Sacrament, one; Christ the King, two; St. Joseph, one; Our Lady of the Angels, two; Our Lady of Czestochowa, one; Our Lady of Fatima, two; Our Lady of Lourdes, three; Our Lady of Mount Carmel, three; Our Lady of Vilna, one; Sacred Heart, two; St. Andrew the Apostle, one; St. Bernard, one; St. Casimir, one; St. Christopher, one; St. George, two; St. Joan of Arc, two; St. John, one; St. Peter, three; and St. Stephen, two. No accused priests served at Holy Name of Jesus, Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Loreto, Our Lady of Mercy, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Catherine of Sweden, St. Charles Borromeo and St. Margaret Mary.

Ashburnham: St. Denis and St. Anne, none.

Athol: Our Lady Immaculate, five; St. Francis, two.

Auburn: North American Martyrs, one; St. Joseph, none.

Baldwinville: St. Vincent de Paul, none.

Barre: St. Joseph, one; St. Augustine, one; St. Thomas a Becket, one.

Brookfield: St. Mary, none.

Boylston: St. Mary of the Hills, one.

Charlton: St. Joseph, none.

Clinton: Our Lady of Jasna Gora, none; Our Lady of the Rosary, none; St. John, one.

Douglas: St. Denis, one.

Dudley: St. Andrew Bobola, one; St. Anthony, none.

East Brookfield: St. John the Baptist, none.

East Templeton: Holy Cross, none.

Fitchburg: Immaculate Conception, none; Madonna of the Holy Rosary, none; Sacred Heart, one; St. Anthony, two; St. Bernard, two; St. Camillus, two; St. Francis, none; St. Joseph, one.

Gardner: Holy Spirit, none; Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, one; Sacred Heart, four; St. Joseph, none.

Gilbertville: St. Aloysius, two.

Grafton: St. Philip, two.

North Grafton: St. Mary, two.

South Grafton: St. James, two.

Harvard: St. Theresa, one.

Hopedale: Sacred Heart, one.

Jefferson: St. Mary, one.

Lancaster: Immaculate Conception, none.

Leicester: St. Joseph, none; St. Pius X, none; St. Aloysius-St. Jude, none.

Leominster: Holy Family of Nazareth, one; Our Lady of the Lake, two; St. Anna, three; St. Cecilia, one; St. Leo, two.

Linwood: Good Shepherd, none.

Lunenburg: St. Boniface, one.

Manchaug: St. Anne, one.

Mendon: St. Michael, none.

Milford: Sacred Heart, none; St. Mary, one.

Millbury: Our Lady of the Assumption, none; St. Brigid, one.

Millville: St. Augustine, none.

North Brookfield: St. Joseph, one.

Northboro: St. Bernadette, one; St. Rose of Lima, two.

Northbridge: St. Peter, two.

Otter River: St. Martin, one.

Oxford: St. Roch, four; St. Ann, one.

Paxton: St. Columba, one.

Petersham: St. Peter, two.

Princeton: Prince of Peace, none.

Rutland: St. Patrick, none.

Shrewsbury: St. Anne, none; St. Mary, none.

Southboro: St. Anne, none; St. Matthew, one.

Southbridge: Notre Dame, two; Sacred Heart, none; St. Hedwig, none; St. Mary, two.

Spencer: Mary, Queen of the Rosary, one.

Sterling: St. Richard, none.

Sturbridge: St. Anne-St. Patrick, none.

Sutton: St. Mark, none.

Upton: Holy Angels, two.

Uxbridge: St. Mary, five.

Warren: St. Paul, one; St. Thomas, one; St. Stanislaus, none.

Webster: Sacred Heart, none; St. Joseph, none; St. Louis, none.

West Boylston: Our Lady of Good Counsel, one.

West Brookfield: Sacred Heart, none.

Westboro: St. Luke, one.

Westminster: St. Edward the Confessor, one.

Whitinsville: St. Patrick, none.

Winchendon: Immaculate Heart of Mary, one.

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