

## **2 clergymen who hid abuse still working**

**As the Bridgeport Diocese tries to move beyond the priest sex abuse scandal, the release of 12,000 documents has revealed the roles key diocesan leaders played in the cover-up. Two bishops involved in the concealment are gone, yet two key church leaders**

The Conneticut Post online

Updated: 12/06/2009 07:15:11 AM EST

By Daniel Tepfer

STAFF WRITER

Among the thousands of documents released last week by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport were depositions and other papers that revealed the involvement of former Bishops Walter Curtis and Edward Egan in the cover-up of alleged sexual abuse of children by priests in the diocese.

But the documents also detail how two senior diocesan prelates, Monsignors William Genuario and Laurence Bronkiewicz, reviewed sex abuse complaints against priests and gave orders to move them around. Both men remain active in the diocese and hold senior positions.

Genuario is currently head of the diocese's tribunal, a court where people can bring petitions to adjudicate issues involving their rights or status. Bronkiewicz is pastor of St.

Mary's Church in Ridgefield, one of the wealthiest parishes in the diocese.

"I have no comment on anything," said Genuario when reached at his diocese office. A receptionist at St. Mary's said Bronkiewicz is on a retreat and could not be reached. The diocese did not return calls or respond to e-mails asking for comment.

At a time when the diocese is striving to put the sex abuse scandal behind it, pointing to Bishop William E. Lori's public apology after he took office in 2001, his swift suspension of implicated priests and enactment of a model program to prevent abusive behavior, the release of the documents on Tuesday has led to a fresh chorus of protests and demands.

Some of that is directed at the continued church

---

## Advertisement

---

leadership roles played by Genuario and Bronkiewicz.

"This is precisely why child sex crimes and cover-ups in the church continue: because those who conceal felonies are rewarded, not punished, time and time and time again, in Connecticut and across the world," said David Clohessy, national director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

"Let's get real: why would church officials and employees reform, when virtually none of the thousands of priests, nuns, bishops or cardinals who keep secrets, protect predators, stonewall police, ignore victims, and deceive parishioners have ever even lost one day's pay? Given what amounts to essentially an enormous endorsement of wrongdoing, only the most naive would believe that anyone in such a system would voluntarily 'reform.'"

Added Cindy Robinson, of the Bridgeport law firm Tremont & Sheldon, who has represented more than two dozen people abused by priests in the diocese, "The newly released documents show that priests who helped hide clergy sex abuse were rewarded by the hierarchy of the church. This was because they were protecting the church from scandal."

All told, the diocese by 2003 had agreed to pay \$37.7 million to settle dozens of claims of sex abuse committed by priests against minors, many of them altar boys.

### Genuario's role

Genuario was ordained a priest in the diocese in 1956. He was appointed chancellor in 1970, and in 1978 he became vicar general of the diocese, the right-hand man of then Bishop Curtis.

In the early 1960s complaints were made to the diocese that the Rev. Laurence Brett had been sexually abusing children.

A male Sacred Heart University student complained that Brett, then chaplain at Sacred Heart, had sexually abused him. The student said he had gone to Brett for counseling on a sexuality problem and during the session the priest had asked to examine the student's penis. During the examination, he said, Brett began performing oral sex on the student and then bit the teenager's penis, causing the student to have a medical problem.

The incident was discussed in a letter written by Genuario on Dec. 2, 1964. The letter states that Brett admitted to the incident.

The letter went on to state that Brett was to be taken away. "A recurrence of hepatitis was to be feigned should anyone ask."

In his deposition, released with other documents, Genuario admitted that not only did he prepare the so-called hepatitis letter but he also typed it himself. Asked by then-victims' lawyer, T. Paul Tremont, why he did it, Genuario added, "I was the vice chancellor at the time and was called in to (do the work)."

A few days later, Genuario met with another man, Mark Frechette, who had claimed he was abused by Brett. "He really has his astrology down !!!" Genuario wrote in a memo. Frechette later committed suicide.

In the deposition Genuario acknowledged he at one time spoke to a woman who complained she had an affair with Monsignor Gregory Smith. Smith would later confess to Bishop William Lori that he abused two young women at St. Theresa's Parish and was suspended.

"She called me as a married woman, I believe, toward the end of 1980s, and she wanted me, as I remember, to advise her as to what to do because she was going to be at a religious function in which Monsignor Smith was going to be, and that she could not -- she did not want to be there and she wanted the whole situation changed," Genuario said in his deposition.

Tremont then asked Genuario if he had then contacted Monsignor Andrew Cusack, who was in charge of handling sexual abuse complaints against priests at that time.

Genuario replied that he had not.

Tremont later asked Genuario if he denied never telling parishioners that a priest was being sent away because of sexual misconduct.

"I'm not going to deny it," he said.

What Bronkiewicz did

Bronkiewicz was ordained into the priesthood in 1973. Initially assigned to St. Mary's Parish in Stamford, he was sent to Rome to complete a graduate degree in theology. In 1987 he was appointed Episcopal Vicar for Clergy at the diocese, making him the supervisor of all the diocese's priests. Bronkiewicz would later be appointed chancellor of the diocese by then-Bishop Egan, and eventually he took on the title of diocese administrator after Egan left in 2000 to become New York's cardinal.

In 1968, the Rev. Martin Federici, then a teacher at the former Central Catholic High School in Norwalk, was accused of molesting a teenage boy. Federici was removed from his teaching assignment and appointed to Assumption parish in Westport. Ten years later he was again accused of molesting a boy while at St. Thomas the Apostle Parish in Norwalk.

In November 1978, he was sent for evaluation to a New York psychologist after he was caught stealing \$50 a week from the church's collection. But just days before he was to leave he was pulled over by Westport police after they spotted him driving with a young boy in his car. The boy claimed Federici had been rubbing his leg. A police lieutenant reported the incident to the diocese, and no other action was taken.

Although the psychologist found Federici "has a very poor contact with reality," in 1981 he was appointed pastor at St. Joseph Church in Shelton. Two years later he was accused of sexually assaulting a teenage boy in the rectory. Federici was subsequently assigned to St. Edward the Confessor Church in New Fairfield.

On March 21, 1994, Bronkiewicz wrote a letter to New York psychiatrist Louis Padovano, informing him that he will be sending Federici to him for further evaluation.

"I met with Father Federici on March 14, 1994, to review the enclosed background as well as discuss a recently reported incident involving an eighth-grade boy in All Saints' School in Norwalk where Father Federici goes on Mondays to lead discussions in the three eighth-grade classes," the monsignor wrote.

Two months later Bronkiewicz issued a memo to diocese officials dated May 31, 1994:

"Effective today, Reverend Martin J. Federici begins a sabbatical of indefinite length for the purpose of personal growth. Should you receive any inquiries from parishioners of Saint Matthew Parish or others concerning Father Federici please confirm what was announced at the weekend Masses, that Father Federici requested and was granted a sabbatical by the Diocese."

On July 23, 1996, just days after the diocese was served with a lawsuit accusing Federici of abusing children, Bronkiewicz wrote Federici telling him he had been suspended from his priestly faculties.

Although there had been several complaints of the Rev. Charles Carr abusing children followed by the priest spending time at the Institute of Living counseling center, in June 1990 Bronkiewicz wrote Carr, informing him he had been appointed Parochial Vicar at St. Philip Church in Norwalk. But the letter informs Carr he was "restricted from ministry to pre-adolescents and adolescents."

More allegations would later surface of Carr having abused children, but it was not until March 30, 1995, one day after the diocese was served with a lawsuit accusing Carr of abuse, that Bronkiewicz wrote Carr a letter telling him he had been suspended.

Also included among the documents released Tuesday is a memorandum from Bronkiewicz informing other diocese officials, "In view of the allegations contained in the civil suit served on us yesterday, the faculties of Reverend Walter P. Coleman have been withdrawn."

## Moving forward

More than 12,000 documents were released by the diocese Tuesday, the culmination of an eight-year legal battle by four newspapers to make the records public. The documents contain affidavits from alleged victims and their families, depositions from accused priests and from church officials, letters written by church leaders, transcripts of hearing testimony and a variety of motions filed by attorneys for the diocese and for the victims.

The diocese had steadfastly opposed the release of the records, saying that many of the records had been given to a court under protective orders that they be sealed and that no public interest was served by their release. The diocese also argued that exhaustive news media coverage in the 1990s and 2000s already had fully aired the cases.

The 87-parish diocese serves more than 460,000 registered Catholics in Fairfield County and has 242 priests, according to its Web site.

The sex abuse allegations in Bridgeport mirrored those that surfaced in several other dioceses across the United States in the early 2002, including in Boston, Los Angeles, Dallas and San Diego. Church officials authorized the payment of hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements and enacted policies they said would prevent abusive priests from going unpunished and would provide a safe haven for all Catholics to practice their faith.

Lori has been and continues to be a leader in that drive.