

May 16, 2003

His Eminence Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
Piazza del S. Uffizio 11
00193 Rome, Italy

Your Eminence:

In accord with the norms of *Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela*, I am submitting for your consideration the case of a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. Reverend Franklyn Becker has been accused of multiple acts of sexual abuse of minors. The summary of these allegations is enclosed. Father Becker has admitted that a number of these acts of sexual assault occurred.

Over the years, efforts were made to provide spiritual and psychological interventions that would rehabilitate Father Becker. None of these efforts have been successful as he reoffended after each intervention, often while still in therapy. Father Becker was diagnosed as an impulsive pedophile in 1983. At that time, it was thought that a non-parochial assignment might be possible. A further psychological assessment was undertaken in 1996, after an additional accusation of past behavior came forward. In that evaluation it was advised that the potential for future reoccurrence of past behavior existed. Even while in ongoing therapy, he was known to have obtained child pornography. With our current understanding of the nature of his condition, it is clear that he will never be able to assume any public ministry.

As we have reviewed the various files, it is clear that he consistently abused his office both to gain access to vulnerable boys and to elicit the trust of their parents. Both in his parochial assignments and in his temporary functioning as a cruise chaplain, he found opportunities to abuse his office in a flagrant and repetitive fashion.

The impact on his various victims has been significant. The Archdiocese of Milwaukee is paying ongoing therapy costs for several of them and has done so for a number of years. Our new found awareness of the severity of damage caused by sexual abuse at the hands of clergy makes it impossible for us to ignore this situation.

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On May 10, 2003, Father Becker was arrested for sexual assault. The alleged offense took place in California in the 1970's but, because he left the jurisdiction of the state, it remains an offense that can be prosecuted. He will be extradited from Wisconsin to California for trial. The public display that will now take place in the criminal trial in California, to say nothing of the civil suits that could arise there, makes the potential for true scandal very real. The media reports on this case have already begun.

Given the nature and frequency of the alleged and admitted sexual abuse, along with the serious abuse of office, I have pondered long and hard to arrive at an opinion about the most appropriate action to be taken. In order that justice may be made manifest and healing of the victims and the Church may proceed, I am asking that Reverend Franklyn W. Becker be dismissed *ex officio* from the clerical state. Whatever financial needs he may have can be provided for from a special fund we will set up until such time as he is able to draw from the pension fund. Since it is conceivable that he will be spending some time in prison, he may be eligible for this pension by the time of his release.

If the judgement of Your Eminence is that this case should proceed to a dismissal by decree of your Congregation, I would cede to that judgement. Furthermore, if it is your judgement that this case should proceed through a canonical penal process, I humbly request a dispensation from prescription as well as a sanation of any procedural errors that may have occurred during the years this case was under investigation. The severity of the offenses is such that it is my opinion that these requests are justified.

I look forward to your further instructions in this matter.

With sentiments of deepest esteem, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of Milwaukee

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