

Father Nicholas V. Cudemo

Father Nicholas V. Cudemo, ordained in 1963, was described to the Grand Jury as “one of sickest people I ever knew” by Monsignor James E. Molloy, Cardinal Bevilacqua’s Vicar for Administration. Father Cudemo raped an 11-year-old girl, molested a fifth grader in the confessional, invoked God to seduce and shame his victims, and maintained sexually abusive relationships simultaneously with several girls from the Catholic school where he was a teacher. His own family sued him for molesting a cousin.

Yet, with serious allegations against the priest on record, Cardinal Bevilacqua twice promoted him to serve as pastor of Philadelphia parishes. Only after victims threatened to name the Cardinal and the Archdiocese in a lawsuit was Fr. Cudemo removed from his pastorate.

Even so, in January 1997, after the victims withdrew their lawsuit, the Cardinal’s Secretary for Clergy, Monsignor William Lynn, presented Fr. Cudemo with a certificate declaring him “a retired priest in good standing in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia,” and asking that he be permitted to function as a priest in any other diocese in the country. Monsignor Lynn issued this certificate one year after a panel of pastors had recommended Fr. Cudemo’s removal as pastor due to “several grave causes” and despite the Archdiocese’s knowledge of at least 10 separate allegations against the priest involving sexual abuse of girls. In March 2003, Fr. Cudemo told one of his former victims that the certificate was allowing him to minister in Orlando, Florida, where he now lives part-time.

Perhaps most disturbing, and revealing, about the Archdiocese’s handling of Fr. Cudemo’s abuse of children is that Church officials have never admitted or acknowledged their misplaced priorities. In 2003, long after the priest’s many abuses were well known to the Archdiocese, Cardinal Bevilacqua continued in his Grand Jury testimony to defend the Church’s handling of Fr. Cudemo’s case. He did so in the face of overwhelming evidence – that Archdiocese managers had ignored or failed to follow up reports of abuse; that they had concealed information from and lied to parishioners; that they had allowed Fr. Cudemo to remain in place long after his abuse was well known, even after he refused treatment; and, finally, that they had permitted Fr. Cudemo to retire early and continue acting as a priest rather than remove him from ministry.

A list of some of the victims identified in evidence before the Grand Jury makes clear both Fr. Cudemo’s unrelenting depravity and the extent of Church leaders’ knowledge when they kept reassigning the priest. This list includes only those girls who were the subject of formal complaints made to Archdiocesan managers. It does not include the names of girls that the Archdiocese learned of either secondhand from the victims who came forward or from the priest himself.

<u>Date Abuse Began</u>	<u>Victim</u>	<u>Date Abuse Reported</u>
1964	“Donna”	1991
1966	Anonymous Letter	1966
1969	Hysterical Girl	1969

1969	Girl in Fr. Cudemo's Room	1969
1969	"Sister Irene"	1991
1969	"Ruth"	1991
1971	"Sister Margaret"	1991
1973	"Patricia"	2004
1973	"Stacy"	2004
1975	"Emily"	1977
1976	"Marion"	1991
1982	"Theresa"	2001

Saint Stanislaus (1963-1968): The Archdiocese ignores report of Father Cudemo's three year "love affair" with a high school junior.

Father Nicholas Cudemo began his first assignment, as assistant pastor at Saint Stanislaus parish in Lansdale, in June 1963. In April 1966, Cardinal Krol received a letter from an anonymous parishioner informing him that Fr. Cudemo had carried on an "affair" for the entire three years he had lived in the parish with a girl identified as a junior at Lansdale Catholic High School.

Father Cudemo denied the allegation, and church files reflect no further investigation or action. No effort was made to talk to the victim. Father Cudemo remained in place for two more years, during which time he also sexually molested a cousin of his, Donna.

Bishop Neumann High School (6/68-2/69): Father Cudemo is transferred five months after school starts because of "particular friendships" with students.

In 1968, Fr. Cudemo was assigned to teach at St. John Neumann High School. Archdiocese records turned over to the Grand Jury include no new allegations from his stint at Neumann, yet Fr. Cudemo was transferred out after only five months of school. His place of residence, as well as his teaching assignment, changed abruptly on February 10, 1969. Reports from his next assignment indicate that he continued to sexually abuse a girl from Lansdale.

Although the Grand Jury received no records from 1968 which might explain Fr. Cudemo's sudden transfer, a later memo, written by Chancellor Francis Statkus in 1977, made reference to the reason. The Chancellor recorded that he told Fr. Cudemo, who was again accused of sexually abusing a girl in 1977, that he might have to be moved from teaching to parish ministry "since he has already been changed twice previously to other high schools" because of "particular friendships" with female students.

Archbishop Kennedy High School (2/69-6/73): Father Cudemo sexually abuses many girls and is permitted to teach for four years after two incidents are reported to the Archdiocese.

In August 1969 two current incidents are reported to the Archdiocese.

In February 1969, Fr. Cudemo took up a new teaching assignment at Archbishop Kennedy High School and a new residence at Saints Cosmas and Damian in Conshohocken. Six months after he arrived, the pastor of his rectory reported to the Archdiocese two instances of inappropriate behavior with girls.

On August 20, 1969, Fr. Louis DeSimone told then-Chancellor Terrence F. Monihan that, a few months before, the pastor had interrupted an encounter between Fr. Cudemo and a girl from his earlier assignment in Lansdale. Father DeSimone reported that he heard "some commotion" coming from one of the church offices on a Sunday afternoon. When he entered to investigate, he found Fr. Cudemo trying to "calm an hysterical girl." The pastor asked the girl to leave, which she did — shouting as she went that she loved Fr. Cudemo. The priest told Fr. DeSimone that the girl had a crush on him but that he was not involved with her in any way. He promised the pastor that he would be extremely careful in his behavior with girls in the future.

A month later, Fr. DeSimone learned from two witnesses — his housekeeper and a priest living at the rectory — that, while the pastor was on vacation, Fr. Cudemo had taken another girl into his bedroom for half an hour with the door shut.

Chancellor Monihan informed Fr. Cudemo that his residence would have to change. Once again Fr. Cudemo promised he "would be extremely careful of the way he conducted himself with girls in the future." From September 1969 to November 1971, Fr.

Cudemo lived at Saint Helena in Center Square. He continued to teach at Archbishop Kennedy for another four years after this allegation.

Three victims from Father Cudemo's tenure at Kennedy report abuse in 1991.

Although they did not surface until many years later, in 1991, subsequent allegations show that during his time as a teacher at Kennedy High School, Fr. Cudemo molested at least three other girls. Two of the girls were related to him: one, Irene, who later became a nun, was his second cousin; the other, Ruth, was her cousin, but unrelated to Fr. Cudemo by blood. (Fr. Cudemo had earlier molested Irene's sister, Donna, while he was still at Saint Stanislaus in the 1960s.)

- **Sister Irene**

Sister Irene testified before the Grand Jury that Fr. Cudemo started visiting her home frequently when she was in 6th or 7th grade and her sister Donna, who was five years older, was in high school. When Irene entered high school in 1969, Fr. Cudemo began taking Irene to baseball and basketball games at Kennedy and at Saint Joseph's University.

On one occasion, after a game at Kennedy, Fr. Cudemo stopped his car on route to Irene's house and started kissing her, as she described it, "kind of all over me." She said she was uncomfortable with the way he was touching her body and told him she wanted to go home. At the time, Irene was 15.

From then on she tried to avoid being alone with him, but he managed to abuse her another time while driving a car full of young people. As Irene sat in the front center, next to him, Fr. Cudemo took her hand, put it on his penis, and held it there. Frozen in fear, and not wanting to draw attention, she said she let it happen, becoming numb and pretending she wasn't in her body.

Sister Irene testified that embarrassment kept her from telling anyone about these incidents, and that it never occurred to her he might be doing the same thing to other people. She did not learn of Fr. Cudemo's severe sexual abuse of her young cousin Ruth until 1991.

- **Ruth**

Father Cudemo became acquainted with Ruth through Donna and Irene's family. Ruth was between 8 and 10 years old in the late 1960s when Fr. Cudemo ingratiated himself with her family and her older brother, who was a football player. Ruth's father was also a sports fan, so they would go to games with Fr. Cudemo or have him over to watch sports on television. Ruth told the Grand Jury that her parents felt privileged to have a priest spending time with their family. Fr. Cudemo would often say Mass in their living room and stay for dinner. Her parents felt he was a good influence.

Initially, Fr. Cudemo's interactions with Ruth seemed innocent. He took her for ice cream or to visit his mother. She said she felt special and almost like she "was the only person in the world that mattered...."

Ruth estimated she was around 10 or 11 years old when Fr. Cudemo began sexually abusing her (but she also recalled sexual activity with Fr. Cudemo at the Saints Cosmas and Damian rectory which he left in 1969, when she was still 9). The first sexual incidents happened in his car. He would say, "Well, I really better drive you right home, because if I don't, I'm going to kiss you."

Ruth explained to the Grand Jury how this approach of Fr. Cudemo's made her feel responsible for what happened:

And you know, kind of like I didn't say anything, and then, you know, he would pull over and kiss me; and then each time it was something else, but he would always warn me first, which I didn't know at the time, but it was sort of like his way of making me feel responsible, because if I had a choice, you know, to say no, you know, if he — you know like, I'm warning you, so if you don't say anything, I'm going to do this. But I was, you know, a kid, and I was just like really paralyzed and really — I don't know, didn't really feel like I had a choice.

Fr. Cudemo's actions progressed from kissing, to touching — her breasts, then vagina — then to oral sex. He would call the child on the telephone and instruct her to do sexual things to herself. She said she did not fully understand what was happening at the time.

Ruth testified that Fr. Cudemo began raping her when she was 11 years old, which would be in 1971. After raping her, he would hear her confession. He would tell the 11-year-old that the only way for her to connect with God was through him. Only after confessing was she “worthy of God’s love.” He convinced the child it was really a “life or death situation,” that she couldn’t survive without the priest.

Ruth told the Grand Jury that Fr. Cudemo took her for an abortion of a fetus she conceived from his rapes sometime before she started high school in 1973. She remembered it was not long after she started menstruating, when she was 11 years old. Father Cudemo blamed the young girl and questioned how she could be so stupid as to become pregnant. She said he was mad because he was “very pro-life.” She said she was terrified, but Fr. Cudemo did not stay with her at the abortion clinic.

Father Cudemo transferred from Kennedy to Cardinal Dougherty High School in June 1973. Ruth began Dougherty as a freshman in September 1973.

- **Sister Margaret, I.H.M.**

Margaret, who later became a nun, was a high school junior when she met Fr. Cudemo. She informed Archdiocese officials that Fr. Cudemo molested her for two years until she graduated in 1973.

In October 1991, Sister Margaret told Msgr. Lynn, the Cardinal’s Secretary for Clergy, and Msgr. Molloy that her first encounter with Fr. Cudemo occurred when he took her and a boy to a wedding in New York. When they stayed overnight, Fr. Cudemo put the boy in one bedroom and had Margaret sleep in the priest’s room. In the morning, he got into her bed wearing only boxer shorts. He told her he had wanted to sleep with her the night before.

She said that Fr. Cudemo never had intercourse with her, but that he hugged, kissed, touched, and fondled her many times over the two years. He would lie on top of her and then go into the bathroom. She told of a train trip to Florida with Fr. Cudemo during which he took her hand, as she sat beside him, put it on his penis, and said, “hold me.”

Sister Margaret described the shame she felt as a result of what Fr. Cudemo had done to her. She told how he would come to her convent years later to lead retreats and hear confession and how that was torture for her.

When Sister Margaret came forward 18 years after Fr. Cudemo's abuse had ceased, she was still angry. According to Msgr. Lynn's notes of their conversation, she could not understand why Fr. Cudemo was still in a parish when she knew "this isn't the first we've heard about this" She told Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn of another nun, "Catherine," who she knew had been friendly with Fr. Cudemo and thought might have been victimized. Sister Catherine had a nervous breakdown and said she "hated" the priest.

Father Cudemo was transferred from Archbishop Kennedy High School to Cardinal Dougherty High School in June 1973. Although the Archdiocese provided the Grand Jury with no records from 1973 to explain the transfer, a girl named Marion, who was involved with Fr. Cudemo for many years, told the Grand Jury she believed it was because of "problems with females." Sister Margaret also remembered Fr. Cudemo telling her in 1973 that he had been "called downtown" by the Vice Chancellor because of his behavior with girls. A 1977 memo by Chancellor Statkus confirmed that Fr. Cudemo was transferred from Kennedy because of his "particular friendships" with girls. It was the priest's second transfer from a high school – a fact later noted by the Chancellor to explain why Fr. Cudemo might have to be changed from teaching to parish ministry in 1977. In 1973, however, the Archdiocese responded to the priest's sexual impropriety by giving him his third teaching assignment.

Cardinal Dougherty High School (6/73-9/77): Father Cudemo abuses at least five students; when the Archdiocese learns of one of these victims in 1977, it transfers Father Cudemo to an unsuspecting parish.

At Cardinal Dougherty, Fr. Cudemo added at least four new young victims to the ones he was already abusing. According to the Archdiocese's own records, there was a period in 1976 and 1977, lasting almost a year, during which Fr. Cudemo was reportedly abusing at least three of his students regularly.

Patricia and Stacy tell the Grand Jury of their abuse while students at Cardinal Dougherty

Two victims of Fr. Cudemo's, Patricia and Stacy, came forward to testify before the Grand Jury after reading a July 25, 2004, newspaper article, naming Fr. Cudemo as a

priest who abused minors. They said that they were not surprised, but felt guilty for not speaking up sooner. The two women had been friends during their junior and senior years at Cardinal Dougherty High School from 1972 to 1974. Both were accosted by Cudemo when they were 17 years old and in their senior year of high school.

Patricia testified that Cudemo constantly touched and hugged her and that it was routine when accompanying him in his car, even with others present, for him to take her hand and put it between his legs. She told of three incidents which went far beyond this touching, in one case terrifying the teenager. The first incident, she said, took place as she cleaned in the chapel after school one day. She said that Fr. Cudemo entered the chapel, came over behind the altar where she was working, and began "chitchatting." The next thing she knew, she was pinned against the wall and he was kissing and touching her body. Before anything else happened, the principal of the school, Father James Howard, entered the chapel and saw them. She said that Fr. Cudemo immediately stepped away from her and left the chapel without a word. Patricia testified that she could not remember the principal's exact words, but that his message to her was clear -- if she said anything about the incident, she would be expelled. She said that he asked her no questions about the incident or her welfare.

She continued to see Fr. Cudemo around school and on outings in his car with other students. She said that she felt safe when with a group, but twice Fr. Cudemo dropped the other teens home before her. Both times, when he had her alone, he sexually abused her. The incident which scared her most, happened when the priest pulled his car to the side of a dark and deserted road "in the middle of nowhere." She testified that after stopping, Fr. Cudemo pulled her toward him and began to kiss her. She said that she pled with him: "Please don't do that." When she began crying and asked what he was doing, she said, he unfastened his pants and pulled down the zipper. She said that he got angry and the more she cried, the angrier he got. She said that he kept pulling her hand over to try to make her touch his exposed penis. He told her he couldn't believe she "didn't want to do this." She said that she was terrified by his anger and truly thought she was in danger of physical harm. She said she did not know how long the activity lasted, but eventually she took her hand away and he drove her home. This was one of the last times she saw Fr. Cudemo.

Patricia's friend, Stacy, testified that she came to know Cudemo because she was the president of the school's community service organization and he was a moderator for the group. She described how she was in class one day when a hall monitor entered with a note for her teacher. The teacher then announced that Fr. Cudemo wanted to see Stacy in the sacristy. She said that when she entered, Fr. Cudemo approached her, hugged her longer than she thought normal, and then began to kiss her. She said that she pushed him away and asked why he had wanted to see her. He answered that he "loved being close to her" and "just wanted to be with" her.

Stacy said that she continued to have a relationship with Fr. Cudemo in which he aggressively tried to persuade her to become a nun. She did not describe other sexual incidents. She testified that she lost touch with Fr. Cudemo after she turned 18, except for one time, four years later, when he stopped by her mother's house unannounced. She said he was accompanied by two young Dougherty girls.

Then, in March 2003, Fr. Cudemo called Stacy to wish her a happy 47th birthday. He said that he had been in trouble with the Archdiocese in the 1990s, telling her: "They're calling me a pedophile, but I don't like little boys." He said that he had been accused of hurting girls and he wanted to know if he had hurt her. She told him how inappropriate she thought his behavior had been. Finally, he told her that he was living in Orlando. He explained that he was able to minister and say Mass because the Philadelphia Archdiocese had given him a letter stating that he was a priest in good standing.

The Archdiocese is told of Emily's abuse in 1977.

The Archdiocese learned of one victim from this time, Emily, shortly after she graduated from Cardinal Dougherty, and while she was still being abused by Cudemo. In July 1977, Emily's best friend, "Denise," and Denise's mother came to see then-Chancellor Francis J. Statkus. They informed him that Emily (they declined to give her last name) had told Denise that Fr. Cudemo had been having sex with Emily since June 1975, the end of the girls' sophomore year of high school. The relationship had continued through high school and was ongoing in July 1977 after they had graduated. Denise told Msgr. Statkus that she was coming forward because she felt the situation was wrong and

she feared “tragedy might ensue.” She explained that she and Emily had started teachers college at Bloomsburg State following graduation, but that Emily had dropped out following a visit from Fr. Cudemo. Denise said that, while at Bloomsburg, Emily had confided that she feared she might be pregnant. Monsignor Statkus noted that in late July “however, that condition does not exist from the latest information.”

After dropping out of teachers college, Emily accompanied Fr. Cudemo and a niece of his to Florida for 13 days. Another trip was planned to California in August. According to Denise, Emily suspected that Fr. Cudemo “associated with” other girls from school.

Monsignor Statkus interviewed Fr. Cudemo on July 27, 1977, having found out Emily’s full name. He told the priest of the accusations. Monsignor Statkus wrote in a memo that Fr. Cudemo “admitted to all the statements of Denise concerning his association with [Emily]” — except that he insisted there were no “sexual overtones” in this association.

The 41-year-old priest admitted having the girl visit him at his rectory when she was in high school, talking to her frequently on the phone, visiting her at her house, taking her on trips, and driving her around in his car. He admitted that he had visited her at Bloomsburg State earlier that summer and that he had brought her home because, he said, she did not want to continue. He admitted to being attracted to younger girls, “but in no offensive way.”

Monsignor Statkus recorded that Fr. Cudemo offered, “since this was the third occasion that he has been approached by the Chancery on the same subject, namely particular friendships with girls, that he is prepared to face or meet any action which may be directed to him, even being deprived of his faculties.” Despite this offer to remove himself from a situation where he could continue to abuse the diocese’s girls, no one in the Archdiocese asked him to forgo his faculties. Rather, he was told by Msgr. Statkus: “we would consider changing him from the teaching apostolate, since he has already been changed twice previously to other high schools and yet the particular friendships have continued.”

The Archdiocese then reassigned Fr. Cudemo to a parish, Saint Mary Magdalen De Pazzi in Philadelphia – with a school attached to it – despite evidence in his Secret

Archives file, from 1966 and 1969, suggesting that he was quite capable of procuring victims in a parish setting.

Father Cudemo begins to abuse Marion and continues to abuse Ruth.

A year before he was reassigned from Cardinal Dougherty, and while continuing his sexual relationship with Emily, Fr. Cudemo began to abuse another, younger Dougherty student — Marion. A 15-year-old sophomore when the priest began molesting her, she would continue to have a sexual relationship with him for 16 years before informing the Archdiocese in 1991.

Father Cudemo also continued abusing Ruth, whom he had started molesting when she was about 10 years old. She testified that once she entered Cardinal Dougherty High School, Fr. Cudemo started “bringing in other priests” to rape her. She said that the circumstances of sexual abuse by other priests varied, but she testified about one such incident.

She described a time she was at Fr. Cudemo’s rectory and he left her in his bedroom, saying he was going to a wedding rehearsal. He told her he’d be back and asked her to wait. Shortly after Fr. Cudemo left, an unfamiliar priest came into the bedroom and gave the teenager some alcohol. He then raped her and left. When Fr. Cudemo returned, he asked Ruth what she’d been doing. Afraid to tell the truth, she said she had been watching T.V. Father Cudemo then cursed her, called her a liar, and said, “I ran into Father John, and he told me that you seduced him.” She later came to suspect that such incidents were designed by Fr. Cudemo. She said he was “really big into ...punishment.”

Ruth recalled instances where priests she did not know would rape her while Fr. Cudemo was present. She became very upset as she recalled these events, and had to take a break from testifying. Ruth told the Grand Jury that Fr. Cudemo would often insert a Host, the Eucharist, into her vagina and tell her she had “fucked God” or “fucked Jesus.” He told her she was a “walking desecration,” that she was “unworthy of God’s love.” He made her feel ashamed, and then would hear her confession.

Father Cudemo told her she had seduced him and that she was evil. He said that he was celibate before he met her, but that her body made him break his vow. She testified

that she now knows that what he did was just “really sick,” but, as a child, she believed it was her fault. She said she grew up hating herself and her body.

Throughout his tenure at Dougherty High School, Fr. Cudemo took advantage of Ruth’s family’s hospitality, spending several nights a week at their house and eating most meals there. The priest dropped his “friendship” with Ruth and her family when he was transferred out of Dougherty in 1977.

Saint Mary Magdalan De Pazzi (9/77-12/81): Abuse of Marion Continues.

No new victims came forward during Fr. Cudemo’s assignment as assistant pastor at Saint Mary Magdalan de Pazzi parish. His abuse of Marion, who was then a high school senior, continued. She testified that she was often in his room at the rectory. She said other priests saw her at the rectory, but no one seemed to care.

Saint Irenaeus (1/82-6/87): Father Cudemo abuses at least two more girls, but no contemporaneous reports are recorded.

Father Cudemo was appointed assistant pastor at Saint Irenaeus Parish in January 1982. In a memo to Cardinal Krol, his pastor there described him as “popular with the youngsters, serving as director of the CYO Sports and Cultural activities. He was very exacting with the Altar Boys. He visited the school to give religious instructions....” With three allegations of sexual abuse of minors in his file, this news might have been received as cause for inquiry. There is no evidence it was.

In January 2001, the Archdiocese learned from Philadelphia Police Officer Denise Holmes, that Fr. Cudemo had been accused of molesting a student from Saint Irenaeus grade school during his tenure there. The victim, Theresa, came forward nearly 20 years later and reported being molested in the confessional by Fr. Cudemo when she was in 5th, 6th, and 7th grades. In February 2001, she repeated her allegations to Msgr. Lynn’s assistant, Fr. Vincent Welsh. His notes of a telephone conversation with the victim record that Fr. Cudemo touched her genitals, had her touch his, and that he “attempted intercourse.” She said that she had been in counseling for years as a result of what Fr. Cudemo did to her. According to a letter Theresa wrote to the Archdiocese in October

2004, she “specifically asked members of the Archdiocese hierarchy if they knew if Father Cudemo abused other children, and . . . was told definitively NO.”

The victim was not the only one lied to by Archdiocese managers. When Officer Holmes was investigating Theresa’s allegations in January 2001, she pointedly asked Msgr. Lynn if there had been other allegations from Saint Irenaeus. Monsignor Lynn’s own memo recording his meeting with Officer Holmes records: “I stated none of which I was aware.” When the officer persisted and asked why Fr. Cudemo was retired, Msgr. Lynn told her that the situation “all had to do with allegations made by his family.” Both of these statements were false.

Monsignor Lynn had learned of another teen victimized by Fr. Cudemo at Saint Irenaeus from the priest himself. Monsignors Lynn and Molloy had called Fr. Cudemo in after Sister Margaret had been to see them on October 23, 1991. They mentioned to him that they had a complaint, but before telling him who that person was, he began to talk unbidden about another woman, “Isabelle,” who had angrily confronted him at his church just days before.

He told the officials that he’d gotten to know Isabelle and her sister when Isabelle was a freshman or sophomore in high school and Fr. Cudemo was at Saint Irenaeus. He said that her parents would leave her at home alone, not allowing her to have guests or go out. They did, however, trust Fr. Cudemo to be alone with her. He denied “overt sexual activity” with her, but mentioned an occasion when he reminded her that she had “said she would prostitute herself to get money” and then gave her five dollars.

Father Cudemo told the Archdiocese officials that, Isabelle, now 24 years old, had recently confronted him, telling him: “You messed up my life sexually. I have a totally messed up life because of you. . . . You said such things like you would marry me.” The priest said she talked about sexual encounters in his car and about his putting her head in his lap while he was driving.

All the while, as associate pastor of Saint Irenaeus, Fr. Cudemo was maintaining his now 7- or 8-year-old relationship with Marion.

Epiphany Parish (6/87-6/89): Father Cudemo abuses a girl named “Michelle” while continuing his sexual relationship with Marion.

Father Cudemo continued having a sexual relationship with Marion throughout his assignment as assistant pastor at Epiphany Parish in South Philadelphia. Although she was no longer a minor, the abusive and controlling nature of the relationship, begun when she was young and vulnerable, kept Marion from escaping it.

Marion told the Grand Jury that by the time she was an adult, she felt trapped and totally dependent on Fr. Cudemo emotionally. She described the relationship as an addiction and him as a security blanket. She said she couldn't talk to anyone else because she felt “[g]uilty, embarrassed, scared, anxious. All of those negative feelings.” She explained that he had alienated her from her parents, siblings, and friends. He used his position as priest to claim he knew what she was “called to do.” In an interview on November 16, 1991, Marion told Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn that she did everything Fr. Cudemo told her to. She explained that he “uses God” to influence people and “keeps God in the midst of the relationship.”

In a memo written after the meeting, Msgr. Molloy noted: “She had suffered severe psychological harm as a result of the relationship.” Marion suffered two “nervous breakdowns” and “had been suicidal on several occasions as a result of this harm.”

Although he would never talk to her about them, Marion knew of Fr. Cudemo's abuse of other young girls. One of them, she told Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn, “ended up in a mental institution.” Marion told the Archdiocese officials about another girl, named Michelle, who had been the daughter of parishioners at Epiphany when Fr. Cudemo was assistant pastor. According to Marion, the priest had befriended the family and persuaded them to start coming to church. She noted that Michelle's family fit the priest's predatory pattern: “all the friends he spent time with had young girls in the family.” Michelle came to see Marion in Florida in the summer of 1990. She told her she was in counseling because of Fr. Cudemo.

In 1989 Fr. Cudemo left Epiphany when he was promoted to serve as pastor at King of Peace parish in South Philadelphia.

King of Peace (6/89-6/91): Cardinal Bevilacqua promotes Father Cudemo to pastor with multiple uninvestigated allegations in his file.

At the time Cardinal Bevilacqua elevated Fr. Cudemo to pastor of King of Peace parish, the priest's Secret Archives file contained allegations going back to 1966 (a three-year "affair" with a girl from the Lansdale parish), 1969 (Fr. DeSimone's report of two witnessed incidents with girls), and 1977 (details of his two-year sexual abuse of Dougherty student Emily). Father Cudemo was 13 years into his sexual relationship with Marion, whom he had started abusing when she was 15, and he had just purchased a house with her in Florida. In addition, Cardinal Bevilacqua's number-two man, Vicar for Administration Monsignor Cullen, had longstanding personal knowledge of Fr. Cudemo, having spent seven years with him at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary.

Despite all of this, Fr. Cudemo became the new pastor at King of Peace in June 1989. He remained there for two years. During that time he, again, befriended at least one parish family with a teenage girl. In 1991, the Archdiocese was told of allegations that Fr. Cudemo was, at that time, very close to the mother, "Rita," and was also molesting the 13-year-old, "Claire." According to Donna, Fr. Cudemo's cousin and former victim, Claire's great-grandmother said, as she was dying, that she had seen Fr. Cudemo fondling Claire. She pleaded with the girl's family to keep Fr. Cudemo away from the girl.

Claire's mother, however, believed in Fr. Cudemo. He was Rita's pastor, and no one from the Archdiocese had ever informed the parishioners of his unrelenting abuse of girls in his former schools and parishes. She had gotten to know him while helping out at King of Peace. She soon became inseparable from him. Marion told Archdiocese officials in November 1991 that 13-year-old Claire was seen alone with Fr. Cudemo in his car when she and her mother accompanied him to Florida the previous summer. Monsignor Lynn noted that Marion "said she can not say anything happened but when young people are around, Fr. Cudemo always has his hands all over them."

Rita, on the other hand, was unaware of the litany of complaints of improprieties and sexual abuse of young girls in Fr. Cudemo's background. In an interview with Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn in December 1991, it was apparent she thought that the only abuse allegations came from Fr. Cudemo's family. Having heard only his side of the story, she

said she thought his relationship with Marion was platonic. She apparently believed Fr. Cudemo that Ruth was just psychologically sick.

She had no way of knowing about the girl from Lansdale, or Sister Margaret, or Emily, or Isabelle, or Michelle from Epiphany, or Sister “Nancy,” or Sister Catherine, or a girl named “Laura.” The Archdiocese officials knew of allegations relating to all these girls and women, but they weren’t sharing the allegations with Fr. Cudemo’s parishioners who needed to know to keep their children safe. Monsignors Molloy and Lynn declined an offer by Rita to speak with her daughter Claire.

When Fr. Cudemo was reassigned to Saint Callistus in June 1991, Rita went with him as his secretary.

Saint Callistus parish (6/91-5/96): Cardinal Bevilacqua installs Father Cudemo as pastor after learning of Marion and leaves him in place as the Archdiocese receives numerous allegations.

The Archdiocese learns about Marion then installs Father Cudemo in a new pastorate.

Father Cudemo was installed as pastor at Saint Callistus parish on June 23, 1991. In the priest’s Secret Archives file at the time of the appointment were the same allegations of abuse of girls that were in the file in 1989 when Fr. Cudemo was promoted to pastor of King of Peace parish. In addition, just weeks before his installation, Marion came to the Archdiocese with the story of her abusive relationship with Fr. Cudemo, beginning when she was 15 years old. She told Msgr. John J. Jagodzinski, Cardinal Bevilacqua’s first Secretary for Clergy, that she believed Fr. Cudemo was emotionally unfit to take on a new pastorate.

Marion met with Msgr. Jagodzinski on June 6, 1991. She was 31 years old at the time. She told him that Fr. Cudemo had initiated an inappropriate “relationship” with her when she was a sophomore at Cardinal Dougherty and he was a teacher there. She told of the house in Florida that she and Fr. Cudemo bought in May 1989 and still co-owned. She also said the priest was “in a very poor emotional condition,” that he needed to be forced to face himself, and that he should be kept away from other people. Monsignor Jagodzinski

wrote a memo to Msgr. Molloy on June 7, 1991, describing his meeting with Marion and recommending that Fr. Cudemo not be made pastor at Saint Callistus.

Monsignor Jagodzinski's memo expressed his belief that Fr. Cudemo had done what he was accused of: "I cannot help but give some personal reaction to what has been communicated to me, in view of my long association with Nick (high school classmates)" The memo concluded:

[Marion's] story is, in my estimation, largely believable. Her assessment of Father Cudemo's present emotional state, I believe, is fairly accurate. . . . I think that if Father Cudemo were confronted with [Marion's] story (she gave full approval to her being identified as the source) he would not dispute it. In that event, it seems to me very inadvisable that he assume his new pastorate. Perhaps he could be referred to the Anodos Center for evaluation and be given time to reflect on his present and future ministry. Perhaps some time at Villa Saint John Vianney Hospital is in order, if Father Cudemo admits to what has been told.

Monsignor Cullen testified that, although he had no specific recollection, a memo such as this would normally come to him and he would take it immediately to the Cardinal.

With all this information, and against the recommendation of his Secretary for Clergy, Cardinal Bevilacqua installed Fr. Cudemo at Saint Callistus on June 23, 1991. Almost immediately other complaints against the priest began to pile in.

Archdiocese officials learn about Ruth, Donna, and Irene, yet leave Father Cudemo in his pastorate.

On September 25, 1991, Fr. Cudemo's cousins Donna and Sister Irene, I.H.M., and their cousin Ruth, brought their allegations to the Archdiocese. They were accompanied by Ruth's husband, "Will," and Donna and Irene's sister, "Peggy." They spoke to the Cardinal's delegates, Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn.

Donna told of a time Fr. Cudemo was spending the night at her family's house when she was 15. The priest called her into his bedroom and asked her to sit on his bed. He was dressed only in undershorts. After talking to her briefly, he began to touch and kiss her. He told her that it was all right for cousins to be close. After that incident she stayed

away from him. She said it helped that her father thought Fr. Cudemo should not be hanging around so much with young girls, and did not really welcome him in their house.

Sister Irene told of two experiences with Fr. Cudemo's sexual advances when she was a high school sophomore and he was a teacher at Archbishop Kennedy. She also provided the names of two others from her convent whom she suspected had been abused by Fr. Cudemo – Sister Catherine, I.H.M., and a girl named Laura who had left the convent.

Ruth told many but not all of the details of her abuse. She had been 10 years old when Fr. Cudemo started sexually abusing her. She told them that he was manipulative and threatening, that he had a violent temper, and she was afraid of him.

When Monsignor Molloy asked about physical contact, he noted she became "visibly shaken." Eventually, Ruth was able to tell them that Fr. Cudemo would masturbate with her present and tell her to masturbate. He would lie on top of her nude and "ejaculate all over her." He put his penis in her mouth and ejaculated. He would use his finger and mouth on her vagina. He was forceful and would hold her down. She told them this all happened when she was in grade school and high school.

The family members all told of the enormous impact that Fr. Cudemo's abuse had had on Ruth's life. She had attempted suicide several times. She had seizures. She entered terrible relationships. Her husband told how she still slept "in a position of fear with her arm covering her head."

Monsignor Lynn wrote: "[Ruth] stated she just wants to be normal again. She said her life has been ruined. This has had an impact on every part of her life." told the Church officials that it was "hard to accept" the Archdiocese's inaction, knowing that if steps had been taken when Fr. Cudemo was first accused, none of this might have happened. She said that she came to speak to the Archdiocese at this point for the sake of other people. Donna, Irene, and Peggy all said that Fr. Cudemo should be removed from his parish and that he should not be near families with children.

Not knowing that Marion had already made a report to the Archdiocese, Ruth informed Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn that she believed Marion was Fr. Cudemo's next victim.

The family members were all extremely anxious to have Fr. Cudemo confronted and to know what he said. Sister Irene told the church officials she would be willing to confront him if he denied the allegations. Ruth's husband Will said he felt Fr. Cudemo should have to face the civil justice system.

Monsignor Lynn recorded that Msgr. Molloy responded to this threat of legal action by offering a "middle ground." The victims would allow Fr. Cudemo to voluntarily seek treatment; if he refused or there was a recurrence, Msgr. Molloy suggested, the victims could still resort to "whatever legal action is available."

Monsignor Molloy assured Sister Irene that the Cardinal would receive the information from the meeting.

Father Cudemo was interviewed twice in response to his family's allegations, on October 2 and 3, 1991. Father Cudemo gave a rambling mixture of admissions and denials – stating he "possibly" lay nude on top of an undressed girl; had been confronted by a girl about touching her and performing sexual acts on her, but didn't remember doing those things and "I remember everything"; that he had "known lots of women and that it always takes two to do these things;" that if sexual activities did occur, they must have happened 20 years ago; that all the girls were willing, and that "nothing close to sexual happened with these girls." When told his accusers were family, he immediately said their names and talked about having "incidents" with them.

Monsignor Lynn noted that Fr. Cudemo offered to do "anything we ask." He said he would leave the priesthood and give up his parish if asked to. Monsignor Molloy assured Fr. Cudemo, however, that the Cardinal was not asking him to resign from the parish. Monsignor Molloy merely asked whether the priest would be willing to have an evaluation done. When Fr. Cudemo commented that Msgr. Molloy had offered him such an evaluation the year before, as well, Molloy stated, "that in this case it would be good to have because the allegations were very specific." Father Cudemo agreed to an evaluation. Monsignor Lynn's notes do not explain why Msgr. Molloy had offered Fr. Cudemo an evaluation the year before.

Father Cudemo also wanted Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn to know that people had come to him with sexual abuse complaints against other priests, but Fr. Cudemo had never

sent those people “downtown” to report to authorities. No one, apparently, asked who those priests might be.

The Archdiocese officials asked nothing about Fr. Cudemo’s relationship with Marion, even though he mentioned her name repeatedly.

The Archdiocese learns about Claire and leaves Father Cudemo in his parish.

On October 17, 1991, three weeks after they told Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn about their abuse, Ruth and her family members returned to the Archdiocese. They were concerned because, despite all they had told the Archdiocese managers, Fr. Cudemo was still at Saint Callistus. They learned that the Cardinal intended to leave Fr. Cudemo in place until his evaluation, scheduled for December 1, 1991. They were further angered because they had learned that Marion had told the Archdiocese in June 1991, before Fr. Cudemo was reassigned, about her experiences with the priest from the time she was a teen-ager until 1990. The relatives were baffled that, with all these allegations against Fr. Cudemo, the Cardinal insisted that the priest be evaluated before removing him, even temporarily. The relatives were not aware that Fr. Cudemo had volunteered to give up his parish, but that the Cardinal had chosen to leave him in place.

During their second meeting, Msgr. Molloy repeatedly told the victims that Fr. Cudemo denied not only their allegations, but those of Marion as well. There is, however, no record of Fr. Cudemo denying his relationship with Marion. Moreover, anyone hearing the victims’ allegations, coupled with Fr. Cudemo’s explanations, could not reasonably doubt that he had sexually molested many girls.

The victims told Msgr. Molloy that they knew there had been complaints about Fr. Cudemo for years, dating back to Lansdale. Yet Msgr. Molloy, with allegations in Fr. Cudemo’s Secret Archives file from 1966, 1969, and 1977 — two relating to Lansdale — told the victims: “There is nothing in the file that would prevent Father Cudemo from being a pastor.” When he made this statement to the victims, Msgr. Molloy also knew that Msgr. Jagodzinski believed Marion’s report about her abuse.

Even after Donna told Msgr. Molloy about the 13-year-old girl, Claire, currently spending time with Fr. Cudemo (the one whose fondling by the priest had been witnessed

by her great-grandmother), Msgr. Molloy said “there is no compelling evidence at this time to remove him.” Monsignor Molloy assured the victims that he reported such “matters” directly to the Archbishop, but still Fr. Cudemo was left in place.

Monsignor Molloy was not as reticent in suggesting wrongdoing by Fr. Cudemo’s accusers. On October 25, 1991, Fr. Cudemo told Msgr. Molloy that Sister Irene had warned the principal at Saint Callistus elementary school to protect her students from the priest. As recorded by Msgr. Lynn, “Molloy [then] stated that he wanted to ask a rhetorical question. He asked Father Cudemo if he had considered that such behavior might be the basis for Father Cudemo to speak to Sister or any others about defamation of character.”

Archdiocese officials learn of Margaret, Isabelle, and Sisters Catherine and Nancy and still refuse to remove Father Cudemo from the parish.

Less than a week after the second meeting with Ruth and her family, on October 23, 1991, Sister Margaret, I.H.M., came to see Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn. She told of her two years (1971-1973) of molestation by Fr. Cudemo when she was a high school student. She mentioned two other nuns, Sisters Catherine and Nancy, who, she said, were also “friendly” with Fr. Cudemo. She said that one had had a nervous breakdown. Sister Margaret offered, as had the other victims, to confront Fr. Cudemo if he denied the allegations. The Archdiocese managers put her off, but assured the victim that they would “inform the Cardinal again.”

Monsignors Molloy and Lynn questioned Fr. Cudemo again two days later. He admitted his relationship with Marion was sexual. It was also during this interview that Fr. Cudemo, when told there was a new allegation, first guessed it was Isabelle, whom he had abused years before. When told it was an Immaculate Heart nun, he mused that it could have been “Sister Nancy” or “Sister Catherine.”

Once informed that the allegations came from Sister Margaret, Fr. Cudemo admitted kissing, embracing, touching her breast, possibly lying on top of her, and sleeping in the same bed with her and another girl at the same time. He then assured the Archdiocese managers there was no “sexual involvement.”

Monsignor Lynn pointed out to Fr. Cudemo that, despite how the priest might view his actions, what he admitted to was a crime. Despite Fr. Cudemo's admissions to sexual behavior with minors and his simultaneous refusal to acknowledge the behavior as sexual, Msgr. Molloy ended the interview by asking the priest "if he could assure the Archbishop that there is no overt sexual behavior going on now." Monsignor Lynn dutifully recorded that Fr. Cudemo "stated that there is not."

So assured, the Cardinal still did not remove Fr. Cudemo as pastor at Saint Callistus.

The Archdiocese is threatened with a lawsuit, then removes Father Cudemo from his parish.

Totally frustrated, Ruth, Sister Irene, Donna, and their family, wrote to Cardinal Bevilacqua on Nov. 5, 1991 (Appendix D-7). They criticized Msgr. Jagodzinski, the Secretary for Clergy, because nothing was done in response to Marion's information. They apparently did not know that Msgr. Jagodzinski had, in fact, recommended that Fr. Cudemo not be given his new pastorate. They told the Cardinal that they thought Marion's allegation alone should have been sufficient to suspend Fr. Cudemo. They told the Cardinal that their complaints, which Msgr. Molloy told them he believed, were surely sufficient evidence against Fr. Cudemo for the Archdiocese to remove him.

When they wrote their letter, they did not even know that the Archdiocese had recently also learned of Sister Margaret's abuse. Or that the Archdiocese had learned from Fr. Cudemo himself about Isabelle, Sister Nancy, and Sister Catherine. Even so, the victims had come to realize that lack of credible allegations was not the problem. They told the Cardinal that priests they had consulted "uniformly tell us that any substantial change will come only in response to a lawsuit." And so, the victims in their letter threatened to name the Archdiocese and the Cardinal in a lawsuit.

A week later, on Nov. 11, 1991, the Cardinal asked that Fr. Cudemo "withdraw from the parish" until his evaluation was conducted. In making this request, the Cardinal asked Fr. Cudemo "to consider two things: 1) what is good for Fr. Cudemo; 2) what is good for the Church." The priest complied, saying he would do whatever he was asked.

Following an evaluation, Father Cudemo refuses recommended treatment and continues to minister.

Father Cudemo was first evaluated beginning December 1, 1991, at Saint Luke Institute in Suitland, Maryland. Unhappy with the results, and not wanting to begin treatment before Christmas, Fr. Cudemo asked for a second opinion. Cardinal Bevilacqua gave his approval, and Msgr. Molloy agreed to schedule an evaluation at Saint John Vianney Hospital around a trip Fr. Cudemo had planned for Jan. 19-29, 1992. He was informed he could not perform his duties as pastor of Saint Callistus. With no other limitations placed on his faculties, Fr. Cudemo was still free to minister in other parishes, live in their rectories, or visit with their parishioners. Following the second evaluation, the Cardinal directed on February 11, 1992, that Fr. Cudemo be hospitalized immediately. Father Cudemo told Msgr. Molloy that he would not comply. Moreover, aware that the Archdiocese was concerned about a possible lawsuit, Fr. Cudemo told Msgrs. Molloy and Lynn that he would rather go to court, and risk jail, than do as the Cardinal ordered.

Over the next few years, the Archdiocese several times repeated its order that Fr. Cudemo enter treatment, and each time he repeated his refusal. On June 22, 1992, Msgr. Molloy spoke to Ruth. The Church official had earlier suggested to the victims that they forego their lawsuit until they gave Fr. Cudemo a chance to voluntarily get treatment. Monsignor Molloy told them that if he refused, “they would still have an opportunity for legal action.” But when Ruth asked Msgr. Molloy what was happening with Fr. Cudemo, the Cardinal’s delegate did not tell her that the priest had repeatedly announced he would not enter treatment. Instead, Msgr. Molloy told her “it was not yet clear what response he was going to make concerning what is being asked of him.”

Ruth and her husband waited four more months for the Archdiocese to respond. Finally, on Oct. 13, 1992, they filed a civil suit against the Archdiocese and Fr. Cudemo. A review of the files indicates that for the next eight months, Church officials took no action. Father Cudemo was permitted unfettered exercise of full faculties to minister anywhere in the Archdiocese except Saint Callistus.

On June 8, 1993, Msgr. Molloy was notified that Fr. Cudemo had scheduled a Mass in the house of a Saint Callistus parishioner — one of the only things he was prohibited

from doing. Upon further investigation, it was learned that he had been living and celebrating Mass at Annunciation parish. On June 17, 1993, Cardinal Bevilacqua restricted Fr. Cudemo's faculties to saying private Mass. This was two years after Marion had alerted the Archdiocese to Fr. Cudemo's behavior.

Despite the supposed restrictions, Archdiocese files reveal that a year later, Fr. Cudemo was still acting as a priest, still visiting parishes, and still asking to say Mass. Without notification to pastors of any restrictions, they were predictably impossible to enforce. From time to time the Archdiocese was alerted, for example, that Fr. Cudemo was once again "a frequent visitor to [Annunciation] parish and to parishioners," or that he was looking to say Mass.

Although Fr. Cudemo was able to keep himself busy in the parishes of the Archdiocese by flouting his restrictions, he wanted his faculties to be reinstated officially so he could minister in Florida, where he also spent a lot of time. On January 30, 1995, Msgr. Lynn in response wrote that Fr. Cudemo's faculties had been "restricted for the good of the Church and the avoidance of scandal" and would remain so "at least until the resolution of civil litigation."

That litigation was resolved on August 21, 1995, when it was discontinued because the statute of limitations had expired. Father Cudemo remained on the books as pastor of Saint Callistus, but being relieved of his duties there, was free to spend his time visiting parishes and parishioners all over the Archdiocese.

On October 18, 1995, the parochial vicar at Saint Jude Church in Chalfont notified the Archdiocese that Fr. Cudemo had been accused of sexual harassment by a woman doing community service at the church. Father Michael Gerlach asked Msgr. Lynn if Fr. Cudemo should be spending so much time at the parish. The Secretary for Clergy said that decision was up to the pastor. There is no indication that he informed the pastor of Fr. Cudemo's history, of any restrictions on his faculties, or of the danger he posed to young women and girls.

Cardinal Bevilacqua removes Father Cudemo from his pastorate, but then restores his full faculties.

Although the Archdiocese seemed unconcerned by news that Fr. Cudemo was involved in several parishes, Cardinal Bevilacqua was interested in moving him from his official and published assignment as pastor to a less visible status. Because Fr. Cudemo was not being cooperative, the Cardinal, on January 15, 1996, initiated an administrative process to remove him under canon law.

As part of this process, two Archdiocesan pastors, Msgr. Robert T. McManus, Pastor, Saint Joseph Parish, Downingtown, and Fr. Thomas P. Flanigan, Pastor, Corpus Christi Parish, Lansdale, reviewed the allegations against Fr. Cudemo dating back to 1966. Among their findings was that, based on the documents the Archdiocese had in its files, “it is impossible not to see the turpitude that is present and documented in the Acts.” They commented that “the accusations and the scandal will not simply go away and if Father Cudemo was reinstated to the parish there would be great harm to the Church.” They also noted that “there is the grave possibility of civil legal action.” They pointed out that there had been a complaint about harassing a woman from Saint Jude’s just a few months earlier. The pastors recommended that Cardinal Bevilacqua remove Fr. Cudemo as pastor.

But rather than proceed with the removal process, the Cardinal accepted Fr. Cudemo’s resignation on June 28, 1996. In doing so, he bestowed on Fr. Cudemo the status of retired priest, and gave him permission to fully exercise his priestly faculties throughout the Archdiocese. On Jan. 21, 1997, Monsignor Lynn issued an open-ended certificate of “good standing” to assist Fr. Cudemo in his efforts to minister in Florida parishes as well.

Once retired, Fr. Cudemo split his time between Philadelphia and Florida. On February 12, 1999, he wrote the Vicar of Priests in Orlando, who had been reluctant to allow the priest to minister in that diocese. In his letter, which attached his certificate of good standing, Fr. Cudemo described the extensive ministering he was doing in Philadelphia and elsewhere. He listed six parishes where he was involved: Immaculate Conception, B.V.M., Jenkintown; St. Matthew, Conshohocken; St. Thomas Aquinas,

Croydon; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Bridgeport; Annunciation B.V.M., Philadelphia; and All Saints Rectory in Manassas, Virginia.

According to Fr. Cudemo, he filled in for pastors for weeks at a time at these parishes, led retreats for teen-agers and children preparing for confirmation, worked with children in CCD (the religious education program), and performed baptisms, confessions, marriage preparation, marriages, and grade-school and high school liturgies. He said he was at Immaculate Conception every Sunday he was not in Florida or serving in another parish in Philadelphia. He estimated he served the equivalent of two months a year at Saint Matthew in Conshohocken — the parish in which Ruth lived. The pastor at Saint Matthew, Father James W. Donlon, testified that the Archdiocese never informed him about Fr. Cudemo's past.

In his letter, Fr. Cudemo questioned the Orlando diocese's reluctance to let him minister, despite Msgr. Lynn's letter of good standing, when the Philadelphia Archdiocese was being so permissive:

P.S. Father, there is something that puzzles me. I have served for 2½ years since being reinstated and continue to serve in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia (and in some cases in the very area where my accusers reside) with full faculties, in youth work and all kinds of ministries, and I am not able to serve in a far away diocese such as yours.

Monsignor Lynn acknowledged receiving a copy of this letter, which shows Fr. Cudemo bragging about ministering two months of the year in Ruth's neighborhood. Although Msgr. Lynn had heard graphically how traumatized Ruth was by Fr. Cudemo, he did nothing to stop the priest from ministering in her parish. Only after Ruth's husband called Msgr. Lynn, on November 22, 2000, to report what the Secretary for Clergy already knew and to say how upset his wife was, did the Archdiocese do anything. Monsignor Lynn's response was merely to tell the Saint Matthew pastor, Father Donlon, that it "would be best" not to have Fr. Cudemo helping out there. He did nothing to prevent such situations in the numerous other parishes where Fr. Cudemo was active and where his many other victims might worship.

On March 1, 2002, apparently under pressure from the exploding priest-abuse scandal in Boston, Msgr. Lynn informed Fr. Cudemo that his faculties were restricted.

There is no indication on file, however, that Fr. Cudemo's "celebret," vouching for his "good standing," and asking other dioceses to allow him to celebrate Mass, was ever revoked.

In March 2003, Fr. Cudemo told one of his former victims, Stacy, that he was, indeed, ministering and saying Mass in Orlando. He explained that he was able to do so because the Archdiocese of Philadelphia had certified that he was a priest in "good standing."

Cardinal Bevilacqua explains the Archdiocese's handling of Father Cudemo.

Cardinal Bevilacqua testified before the Grand Jury that it was his policy that no priest with a history of sexual abuse of minors was to be recommended to him for assignment. He said that his Secretaries for Clergy — first Msgr. Jagodzinski; later, Msgr. Lynn — knew this policy. They also knew, according to the Cardinal, that before making a recommendation, they were to review the priest's Secret Archives file. Cardinal Bevilacqua told the Grand Jury he did not know of a situation where that policy was ever not followed.

Even knowing all the recorded allegations on file at the time Fr. Cudemo first became a pastor — the complaints about multiple victims from 1966, 1969, and 1977 — the Cardinal refused to say that Fr. Cudemo's appointment was a mistake or a breakdown in policy. The Cardinal's testimony clarified how his "policy," properly carried out, had resulted in the appointment of a notorious child abuser, with serious allegations spanning decades, as a pastor in 1991. When shown the allegations that were in Fr. Cudemo's Secret Archives file in 1989 and still in 1991, the Archbishop shared with the Grand Jury the rationales he would use to discount each one:

Q: If this information had been brought to your attention, would you have made him pastor at King of Peace?

A: I . . . when I look at this, these three documents here, I see one is anonymous. ["Saint Stanislaus Parishioner" reports three-year affair known among the parishioners] It has no value at all to me. The second one [Fr. DeSimone reports two witnessed encounters with girls], there's no admission. I

don't see anything in the second document here of any kind of admission of guilt. We're talking civilly and legally now.

Q: Ok. Go ahead. Continue. We'll talk about them later.

A: The third document [Denise and mother reporting two-year sexual relationship with best friend — Emily], we're looking at secondhand information. We have someone here who won't give the last name of the person, and I don't see that the original so-called alleged victim has brought any kind of allegation against him.

The Cardinal claimed that the first allegation had “no value in it unless you investigate it.” The third allegation, from a victim's friend and her mother, he described as “secondhand” and, thus, of lesser credibility than if the victim had been interviewed. Yet, according to Msgr. Lynn, it was Archdiocese policy not to seek out known victims reported by third parties, thus avoiding acquisition of first-hand information. Emily's last name was learned within a month, but Archdiocese officials never chose to question her.

Even where two priests reported seeing two suspicious encounters between Fr. Cudemo and young girls – where one of those reports corroborated the 1966 allegation, and where Fr. Cudemo admitted his behavior was “imprudent, if not scandalous” – Cardinal Bevilacqua discounted the information because there was no “admission of guilt.” He expressed no displeasure, surprise, or remorse, that this allegation was disregarded in the process of evaluating a potential pastor.

Monsignor Cullen, the Vicar for Administration, confirmed that what the Cardinal claimed was a policy – strictly forbidding the Secretary for Clergy from recommending for assignment any priest with a background of abuse of minors – was, in practice, something quite different. He explained that the Secretary for Clergy could, in fact, recommend priests as suitable for assignment if: (1) there was no definitive proof by Archdiocese standards (for example, an explicit admission or a conviction) or (2) the priest was “rehabilitated” (again by Archdiocese standards – for example, if he had a letter saying “not a pedophile” on file) or, sometimes, (3) if the allegation was old enough. Thus, Msgr. Cullen, like Cardinal Bevilacqua, was able to dismiss the reports from 1966, 1969, and 1977 of abuse by Fr. Cudemo as mere allegations.

Cardinal Bevilacqua, with his attorney's help, took care to distinguish between accusations or allegations and what he called "credible" allegations. When asked to explain what would be required to consider an allegation credible, the Cardinal answered that it would "practically" require an admission by the priest. "Most of the time," he explained, "when we did have allegations, and we said that that person could not be reassigned, it was because the priest admitted it."

Cardinal Bevilacqua grudgingly acknowledged that "possibly" a large number of allegations could be a factor in determining credibility. He added, however, that: "there have been cases where there have been several and turned out to be they're all false." When asked what case that was, he said, "[I]t had nothing to do with this."

Monsignor Molloy testified that he was reprimanded by Msgr. Cullen for telling Ruth and her family that he found their allegations credible. Monsignor Molloy explained that he knew how important it was to victims to be believed and, so, he tried to give them this bit of consolation. He was told, however, not to do that. Monsignor Molloy surmised that he was so instructed in order not to compromise any subsequent legal action.

After Ruth's family's lawsuit was dismissed without judging the evidence (because the statute of limitations was deemed to have lapsed), Cardinal Bevilacqua reinstated Fr. Cudemo's faculties, as Msgr. Lynn had suggested he might. At that point, the Cardinal knew of two psychological evaluations — from Saint Luke and Saint John Vianney — that were negative enough for the Cardinal to have directed the priest to be hospitalized immediately for treatment.

Father Cudemo never went for treatment as directed. Instead, he presented a two-paragraph letter from Hugh H. Carberry, a psychologist he chose, stating that he was not a pedophile. No explanation was provided for the basis of the opinion. Nor was an alternative explanation offered for Fr. Cudemo's long history of sexually abusing young girls. From the letter it is unclear whether the psychologist was aware of the history of allegations against Fr. Cudemo or the admissions he had made about some of the molestations of which he was accused.

Cardinal Bevilacqua's own panel of pastors, which recommended removing Fr. Cudemo, had rejected an earlier opinion of the priest's personal therapist, saying "Doctor

Carberry had not reviewed any of this material, yet he makes statements which are at odds with two other confidential psychological reports and without performing any psychological testing of his own.” That panel concluded on February 7, 1996, that Fr. Cudemo was at risk of acting out — at least until treated. On June 28, 1996, Cardinal Bevilacqua reinstated the priest’s faculties anyway.

Father Cudemo testifies before the Grand Jury.

Father Cudemo testified before the Grand Jury and was given an opportunity to respond to the allegations against him. He acknowledged knowing the girls who accused him of sexual abuse, but declined to answer when asked if their accusations were true. He told the Grand Jury that Cardinal Bevilacqua restricted his faculties from June 1993 until June 1996 (which covered the time period when the victims’ lawsuit was pending and during which the canonical process to remove Fr. Cudemo was ongoing). As soon as these matters were resolved, Cardinal Bevilacqua fully restored Fr. Cudemo’s faculties and he once again freely ministered within the Archdiocese. He remained completely unsupervised or restricted for six years. He testified that during that time, he would sometimes take altar servers, including girls, in his car and out to breakfast after Mass.

Father Cudemo told the Grand Jury that some restrictions were put on his faculties in February 2002, but that he was “not clear” what they were. According to the testimony of Stacy, Fr. Cudemo told her in March 2003 that he was still permitted to minister, at least in Florida, and was doing so. Father Cudemo testified that it was not until June or July 2004 that he was finally told he could not wear a collar and present himself as a priest. This was 12 years after Marion, followed by Ruth and many others, told the Archdiocese of their abuse and the danger Father Cudemo posed to young girls.

After it was determined, in August 2004, that the allegations of sexual abuse of minors lodged against Fr. Cudemo were credible, his case was referred to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, with a request that the priest be involuntarily laicized. Father Cudemo has retained canonical counsel to contest that action.

The Archdiocese’s determined maintenance of willful ignorance in the case of Fr. Cudemo succeeded in fending off, until it was too late, legal action that might have

stopped the priest's sexual abuses. Cardinal Bevilacqua's policies permitted the Archdiocese to discount or dismiss numerous allegations while Church officials systematically refused to follow up on accusations or even to seek out known victims. They allowed the Archdiocese to avoid scandal or accountability while the Cardinal continued to assign and even promote Fr. Cudemo to positions ideally suited for preying on young girls.