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Despite ban, abuser priest remained in ministry for 10 years

by Dan Morris-Young

The Seattle archdiocese has been harshly criticized for not publicly releasing the name of a priest removed from ministry a decade ago for the sexual exploitation of a teen. The priest then socialized with parishioners and performed occasional baptisms, weddings and funerals despite his removal until his past recently came to the attention of some parishioners.

The former chair and vice chair of the board that reviewed sexual abuse allegations in 2004 have leveled unvarnished reproof. That case review board urged the archdiocese to make public Fr. Harry Quigg's identity and offenses.

"The investigation's documents, dating to 2004 and which the archdiocese has refused to make public, would reveal that a 17-year-old boy involved with ... Quigg was passed among the priest and friends, according to multiple sources," wrote Joel Connelly in a blog post Monday for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, an online newspaper.

A May 2 statement from the archdiocese said that now-retired Archbishop Alexander Brunett had gone against the review board's recommendation to release Quigg's name "because of the determination that the sexual contact did not involve a minor" and "Quigg's request to respect his privacy."

The "age of majority in 1980 under both canon law and civil law was 16," it stated, noting that the relationship with Quinn went on for 15 years beginning in 1980, when the victim was 17.

Based "on what the archdiocese has learned recently," the statement promised a "thorough review" of the archdiocese's "relapse prevention program" and monitoring protocols.

It also said "the steps taken ... were not sufficient to alert us of Quigg's violations of the restrictions on the celebrations of the sacraments" and confirmed that pastors, staff members and parishioners where Quigg served had not been informed of his status or of the nature of the allegations.

Quigg's background became public in late April, when the Seattle branch of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests posted his name on its website. Quigg's name had been redacted from the review board's publicly available 2004 report.

Quigg came to SNAP's attention when it was given "an inadequately redacted copy" of the 2004 review board report, according to David Clohessy of the Seattle SNAP office.

SNAP staged a "sidewalk news conference" Thursday in front of the Seattle chancery building to call attention to the Quigg case as well as that of a Christian Brother who SNAP charges "worked at several Seattle area schools and is accused of molesting 50 children."

"Quigg is believed to be living in the Seattle area," the SNAP website says.

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The May 2 archdiocesan release spurred two former review board leaders, retired state Superior Court Judge Terrence Carroll and former U.S. attorney Michael McKay, to write Seattle Archbishop J. Peter Sartain, who succeeded Brunett in 2010.

In the May 6 letter, Carroll and McKay:

- Disputed that the archdiocese only recently became aware of Quigg's post-removal activities, pointing out that a Dec. 20, 2004, letter from the review board to Brunett reported that "a review board member was in the congregation of a liturgy that included the active participation of a priest [Quigg] whom you earlier indicated had been barred from ministry."
- Decried the fact Quigg's name was not made public despite their 2004 exhortation to do so; and
- Described as a gross understatement the description of Quigg's sexual offenses.

"It is our understanding that Archbishop Brunett initially agreed with our recommendation about publishing Quigg's name and preventing him from exercising priestly functions," Carroll wrote in a May 9 email to *NCR*. "We have come to learn recently that Brunett met with him and decided to not publish [his name] and, further, the chancery was grossly negligent in failing to monitor the restrictions on his ministry,"

According to the archdiocesan release, Quigg had agreed to not wear clerical garb, not take part in public ministry, not to "present himself publicly as a priest," and to submit to "the archdiocesan relapse prevention program which included the services of a qualified third party monitor with experience in supervising all types of sexual offenders."

Added Carroll in his email: "Not too long after our [2004] report was published and the Archbishop agreed with our recommendations (or so we thought), one of the board members saw Fr. Quigg saying mass in a local parish. There is a Dec. 20, 2004, letter from the Board where this fact, among others, is made noting the importance of publishing names. This letter was apparently ignored as was any sensible effort to monitor his conduct. We have since come to learn that Fr. Quigg has been officiating at funerals, weddings, baptisms, etc., for the past 10 years. To suggest the archdiocese was not aware of his pastoral

activities is preposterous or an indication of their utter failure to take the responsibilities of monitoring and publishing names in a serious way."

"There could be other situations out there that we do not know about," Carroll told *NCR* on May 11. "I think that as a minimum there needs to be an independent evaluation of the whole monitoring system."

The 2004 letter to Brunett, signed by six review board members, argued that Quigg's "actions were so egregious" that the archdiocese should release the information on him despite Brunett's "concerns about the risk of possible procedural problems under canon law and compromised confidentiality that might accrue if there was premature disclosure."

The signers said they "strongly believe that this information should be released now because the faith community needs to know" and pointed out that "other dioceses have released the names before the Vatican has acted."

The 2004 letter also:

- Criticized a statement by Brunett that future clerical child sexual abuse was unlikely, calling it unrealistic to "guarantee that priests in the future will not engage in sexual abuse ... anymore than society at large can guarantee that sexual abuse of minor can be completely eliminated";
- Noted that the archdiocesan release of the review board's 2004 report "was made only after receipt of our Sept. 16, 2004, letter wherein we threatened to resign if you did not publish it" and that Brunett has "disputed our authority to produce a report and, in fact, attempted to persuade us to accept a significant rewrite ... by your staff -- which we declined to do";
- Expressed concern "about the independence of the new entity you are creating" to replace the review board to oversee priest sexual abuse allegations, and urged "that there be mechanisms in place to insure that disagreements or potentially unfavorable analyses of Archdiocesan actions are not suppressed";
- Said that "disclosure also helps to lift the pall of suspicion currently hanging over the many, many good priests who have not been accused nor suspected of any impropriety"; "may have a deterrent effect on priests who might be tempted in the future"; and would help assure families "that their children are safe";
- Shared worry that "allegations against members of religious orders ... have been treated differently by the church" and that "we ... do not know what happened in those cases, what provisions for safety have been instituted and whether the names of the offending ... will be published in the same manner as diocesan clergy."

On May 6, Sartain and a handful of archdiocesan officials faced an often ireful crowd of nearly 200 parishioners at St. Bridget Parish in North Seattle, where Quigg served as administrator then pastor from 1989 to 2000 and where he has been part of parish life since retiring in 2000.

During the two-and-a-half-hour meeting, Sartain apologized for the breakdown in archdiocesan supervision of removed sexual abusers, answered at times angry accusations and questions, and said he would have made Quigg's name public if he had known what he knows now.

According to a statement prepared by St. Bridget's pastor, Fr. Stephen Okumu, and Deacon Denny Duffell, which was read at Masses May 9-10, "our parishioners were a little angry from the beginning of the evening, ... understandably, and there was little patience with anything that sounded like an excuse or which went off target."

"Archbishop Sartain admitted that mistakes were made and apologized to our community. He said that

several times during the meeting," the statement continued. "... Most people felt that our archbishop was sincere. At the same time, many of those in the room will also be waiting to see what changes the archdiocese makes in its procedures in favor of greater communication and transparency."

"It is probably accurate to say that there are some parishioners who were and are ready to forgive our former pastor. It is also true that many other people also still feel deeply betrayed, and forgiveness will not come so easily," the parish letter added.

"The real problem was not a failure to monitor," one parishioner who asked to remain anonymous wrote in an email to *NCR*. "... The real problem was not notifying the faithful that a popular priest had engaged in egregious sexual abuse of a 17-year-old boy and was barred from his priestly functions. Instead, former Archbishop Brunett gave into the sexual abuser's pleading that his privacy be protected. For 10 years the abusive priest celebrated weddings, baptisms and funerals, wore his clerical collar, socialized and accepted gifts from his former parishioners all of whom believed he was a retired priest in good standing."

Brunett is recovering from a serious stroke and resulting surgery in September.

"Despite the archbishop's apologetic tone, archdiocesan staff continue to spin this and downplay it," the parishioner continued. "According to them, it is just a 'failure to monitor' a priest who had been restricted for 'professional misconduct.' The sad affair and the archdiocese's misleading statements show the need for greater truth and transparency. Why is the impulse always to keep abuse secret and to minimize and downplay it when it finally comes to light?"

In its May 2 press release, the archdiocese said there "are no other known allegations against Quigg."

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