

Donald Wuerl - Zero Tolerance or Zero Credibility?

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Examiner
August 13, 2009

<http://www.examiner.com/x-12613-Pittsburgh-Independent-Examiner~y2009m8d12-Donald-Wuerl--Zero-Tolerance-or-Zero-Credibility>

The recent discovery of former Serra Catholic High School teacher, Kenneth Ghastin, raises several questions about Donald Wuerl's tenure as bishop of Pittsburgh. This is especially the case, since one of the persons who accused the Franciscan brother of molestation committed suicide shortly after having received a \$30,000 settlement.

Background of Kenneth Ghastin, for those who are unfamiliar with him

Brother Kenneth Ghastin was cited in documentation released by the Greenberg Traurig law firm as having abused two brothers at Boston's now-closed Christopher Columbus High School. The same Franciscan teacher was eventually assigned to Serra Catholic High School, in McKeesport, PA, serving there from 1983 to 1991. He was the Brother Ken – as Serra students called him – who helped my son Adam off the school bus, shortly after a second Serra Catholic student put a 32 caliber handgun inches away from the back of his head and pulled the trigger. He was also the Brother Ken who suffered a heart attack shortly after the shooting took place.

The Question of Donald Wuerl's Credibility

I've written about several cover-up scenarios that took place within Pittsburgh as far back as 1985, and which may have led to the attempted murder of my son, as well as the concurrent suicide of my son's shooter and subsequent diocesan ills. By now, readers should be asking themselves if Donald Wuerl deserves to possess the reputation of a no-nonsense kind of a guy when it comes to handling clergy abuse cases. Does Donald Wuerl deserve the Zero Tolerance tagline that is associated with his tenure as bishop of Pittsburgh? And finally, did Donald Wuerl always err on the side of caution when confronting clergy abuse cases in the Pittsburgh diocese? As I examine the Brother Ghastin case and other ones, there's reason for doubt – plenty of doubt.

At the time of the attempted murder of my son, members of the Franciscan order were the administrators of Serra Catholic High School, in McKeesport, PA. The

Pittsburgh diocese owned the institution and its property. According to Rev. Robert M. Capagna, the regional Franciscan provincial, Brother Ghastin has always maintained his innocence. Although there was a settlement, there was never a trial to prove that any crime had been committed.

According to Father Capagna, he had personally discussed the double shooting of December 5th, 1989, with the Father Steven Sysol who was the Headmaster of Serra when the shooting took place. Father Sysol claimed that the shootings were accidents when he talked to Father Capagna about them, and that is contrary to the details of the police report which I finally received almost 19 years after the crime was committed; submitted to me after much reluctance from current McKeesport Mayor Jimmy Brewster.

Now for my concerns:

Who paid the settlement in the Brother Ghastin case? Was it the Archdiocese of Boston or the Franciscans? Has any former Serra Catholic High School student(s) committed suicide, murder, or other bizarre acts which could be linked to a predator stationed at Serra Catholic High School? It seems to me that, if Donald Wuerl had really been concerned about seeking out possible clergy abuse victims, then an attempt to contact former Serra Catholic students would have been undertaken, especially in light of what is now known about former Catholic priest John Wellinger, Boston archdiocesan transplant Kenneth Ghastin, and the sheer number of clergy abuse cases in the Boston archdiocese.

Wouldn't it have made sense for Wuerl to have erred on the side of caution, by means of contacting former students of Serra Catholic High School shortly after the allegations against Brother Ghastin had been made known? Sadly enough, the second suicide victim should have raised a red flag high enough for Wuerl to have notified former Serra Catholic students and their families about the allegations against Brother Ghastin. Were other students victimized at Serra Catholic High School by other predators from the Archdiocese of Boston? That archdiocese, along with the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, is identified as a danger zone to innocent children and an iron curtain of cover-ups. I had two sons who attended Serra Catholic High School during the years in question, and I can assure you that I have never received any notification that students may have been harmed by predatory teachers or administrators there.

Here it is, almost twenty years later, and there are still plenty of unanswered questions about a religious institution that is becoming more known for doing evil than for doing good. For example, there is the recently released report, issued by the Irish Government, detailing the deplorable conditions of Catholic institutions in Ireland, marked by the shameful treatment of innocent Irish children by Irish priests, nuns, bishops, and cardinals. And then there is the scathing report issued by the Philadelphia Grand Jury, concerning the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, hitting even more closely to home than the Ryan Report. Anthony Bevilacqua, former

bishop of Pittsburgh, was labeled a liar for covering up the crimes of those grown men who used children and teenagers as sex toys.

Will more survivors of clergy abuse come forward from Serra Catholic High School or elsewhere in the Diocese of Pittsburgh? Will more revelations about Donald Wuerl's tenure as bishop of Pittsburgh continue to surface? And finally, will any law enforcement officer or agency in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania have the courage to step forward and demand an investigation of the recent findings? Have law enforcement agencies responsible for protecting children been compromised by the local Catholic Church or by our own high-ranking government officials? You'll find out in the weeks to come, as details about Pennsylvania, the apparent predator-friendly State, surface.

Anyone with additional information to this story or similar events please feel free to send a message to my email address is Ference@icubed.com or call me at 412-233-5491.

Reporting live from Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle – where the confluence of the Sicilian mob and the Democratic Party meet to form the deMOBocrats.

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