

The New York Post
June 23, 2001

HIDING PERVERTS WOULD BE A CARDINAL SIN BY: Rod Dreher

THE allegations rocking St. Simon Stock parish present the first public challenge to Edward Cardinal Egan amid the gravest scandal facing the Catholic Church in America: priestly sexual misconduct.

The alleged abuse of a boy in the Bronx parish occurred before Egan became archbishop.

But it's his problem now.

How the cardinal chooses to respond to it will tell New York Catholics a lot about how this terrible problem will be treated under Egan.

The early signs are not encouraging.

My colleague, Douglas Montero, and I tracked down Father Ruben Rodriguez, former pastor of the Tremont church and alleged ringleader of the four priests, at a parish in Puerto Rico.

Father Ruben said he had nothing to do with the alleged scandal, and instead implicated his former cohort, Father James Tamburrino.

That may be true, or it may not.

But it's an outrage that a clergyman at the heart of a lawsuit alleging revolting sex acts with a teenager is still doing parish work without being cleared.

Do the people of his new parish know about this?

We know that Father Esteban Rodriguez, also accused in the lawsuit, is working in Puerto Rico as well. Is he in a parish, too?

Father John Albino is serving at St. Patrick's Church in Staten Island's Richmondtown section.

Shockingly, the lay leadership has not been told the priest has been named in a sex-abuse lawsuit.

Sorry, that won't fly, not given the Catholic Church's history of protecting pedophile priests by keeping the laity in the dark.

Tamburrino is senior chaplain at an upstate forensic hospital, away from children. But don't the patients deserve better than to be counseled by a priest under suspicion of having engaged in sex romps with a teenage boy?

What's more, court documents show that the church's lawyers are trying to suppress a referral letter and a medical and psychiatric evaluation performed on

Father Ruben after the lawsuit was filed.
Keeping these documents out of court is sound legal strategy. But it's rotten policy for the church.

The church should be doing everything it can to expose the truth of this case, for the sake of the victim, or victims - be they abused parishioners or falsely accused priests.

That's not what's happening.

Indeed, the plaintiff's lawsuit alleges that church officials met with him, offered him a church-funded lawyer, and asked him to sign a document relieving the church of legal responsibility.

He didn't take the bait.

If the church really did try to pull that kind of slick move on this young immigrant, for shame.

What is Cardinal Egan's role to be? The faithful have a right to expect their archbishop to stand on the side of truth and justice.

If this plaintiff is making the whole thing up, may God help the cardinal bring this to light.

But if these priests are guilty, then God help the cardinal if he uses his sacred office to keep these hideous moral crimes hidden.

And God help Catholics trying to raise kids in the faith.