

## **Monsignor David E. Walls**

*Monsignor David Walls, ordained in 1960, was a sexual abuser of both boys and girls, yet served as Vicar for Catholic Education in the Philadelphia Archdiocese. Cardinal Bevilacqua left him living in a parish rectory, ministering to all ages, even after learning of the priest's sexual offenses. When the Cardinal testified that he did so because he did not know at the time that the victims were minors, the Grand Jury did not find his explanation credible – or consistent with the evidence. The Cardinal's testimony did, however, provide a window into the deceptions, half-truths, and rationalizations with which the Archdiocese has sought to justify and cover up practices that systematically abetted the abuse of children.*

*Monsignor Walls presented an early test of Archbishop Bevilacqua's handling of sexually abusive priests. Within weeks after taking over the Philadelphia Archdiocese in February 1988, the Archbishop learned that Msgr. Walls, then serving as Vicar for Catholic Education, was accused of attempting to sexually assault a 17-year-old girl in his rectory bedroom two years earlier and also of making inappropriate advances toward two boys (one the brother of the female victim). Shortly thereafter the Archbishop received a memo that Msgr. Walls had admitted the incidents. The pastor of Saint John Neumann, the parish to which Msgr. Walls was transferred following the incidents, told Archbishop Bevilacqua that several parishioners "have stated that he has been involved in" what the parishioners characterized as "pedophilia." The Archbishop's response became his standard practice through the years: he acted to fend off legal liability for the Archdiocese, but gave the priest continued opportunity and cover for his crimes by permitting him to go on ministering while enjoying unrestricted access to parish youth.*

*The Archbishop did remove Msgr. Walls from his high-profile job in the Office of Catholic Education, but solely to avoid legal action. In a May 4, 1988 memo, Archbishop Bevilacqua explained that the "perception of inaction could very well trigger the parents to resort to some kind of further procedure through court action." The Archbishop's effort to avoid the "perception of inaction" characteristically included no attempt to protect parish children. Archdiocese managers contacted neither victims nor civil authorities.*

*Instead, despite pleas from the priest's therapists, from his pastor, and from the Cardinal's own Secretary for Clergy, Cardinal Bevilacqua allowed Msgr. Walls to remain unmonitored in his parish residence in Bryn Mawr – with no formal assignment, few obligations, and limitless unsupervised time in which to procure new victims. For 14 years after learning of the priest's admitted sexual offenses against minors, Cardinal Bevilacqua permitted him to live in the parish rectory, to celebrate Mass with altar boys, to hear confessions, and to counsel parishioners and others through Catholic Human Services.*

### **Cardinal Bevilacqua learns in 1988 of Monsignor Walls' abuse of minors.**

On February 25, 1988, a therapist, Eileen Egan, informed the Archdiocese that Msgr. David Walls had sexually accosted a client of hers, later identified as "Colleen," two

years earlier, when the girl was 17 years old. Vice Chancellor Joseph Pepe met with Egan and recorded the report:

Ms. Egan alleged that one evening this young woman went to the rectory where Monsignor Walls resided to discuss some family difficulties. He brought her up to his suite of rooms, turned the lights out, and proceeded to make sexual advances. He got the young girl down on the floor. She escaped his grasp, got up and he began to pursue her around the room. He used words which Ms. Egan did not explain. The young woman eventually ran out of the rectory and Monsignor Walls pursued her for four blocks. This Ms. Egan assured me was not to assault her client but from what she could learn to calm her client down.

Father Pepe also recorded reports from Egan that Walls had “approached” two boys, one of them the brother of Egan’s client. The therapist told Fr. Pepe that she was concerned about Msgr. Walls’ potential to damage other children because he was still performing parochial duties and was still Vicar for Catholic Education for the Archdiocese.

Later that day, Chancellor Samuel Shoemaker and Vice Chancellor Pepe met with Msgr. Walls. Father Pepe’s notes from the meeting record that Msgr. Walls “minimized” but “did not deny” the allegations regarding Colleen, her brother, and the other boy known to Eileen Egan. Monsignor Walls stated that he had been under the care of a psychiatrist since July 31, 1987, but would not give the name of his therapist.

Father Pepe prepared a memo recording the meetings with Egan and Msgr. Walls. Monsignor Shoemaker told the Grand Jury that Archbishop Bevilacqua was immediately informed of the charges against Msgr. Walls and provided with the written report that included the priest’s admissions.

**A victim’s therapist reports Monsignor Walls’ sexual assault to the Archdiocese, but not to the police, and asks Church officials to remedy the matter.**

Eileen Egan explained to Fr. Pepe that she did not report the assault against her client to civil authorities for reasons relating to her therapy, but was relying on the Archdiocese to “do its duty in looking into the allegations and coming to some resolution on the matter/and incident.” Egan offered that her client and a colleague who knew of another victim were available to talk to Archdiocese managers if necessary “to get some

action on these allegations.” She also asked “that the Archdiocese in some way let her client know they were sorry concerning the incident. . . .”

After Msgr. Shoemaker and Fr. Pepe discussed with the therapist the legal duty to report child abuse, Archdiocese managers decided that another priest, Fr. John McFadden, should be asked to act as a “go-between” with the family of the victim. This decision was originally recorded in Fr. Pepe’s February 25, 1988, report, but was whited out on the copy provided to the Grand Jury, presumably because the advice to use a go-between was provided by legal counsel. The Grand Jury was able to ascertain what Fr. Pepe originally wrote in his report because a subsequent handwritten “file summary” prepared by Fr. Vincent Welsh included a summary of Fr. Pepe’s report, including: “-approved Fr. [John] McFadden as go between w/ family.”

The designation of Fr. McFadden as a go-between is significant because Archdiocese managers testified before the Grand Jury that legal counsel had advised them that they were required to report suspected sexual abuse only when it was reported to them directly by a victim. Therefore, under their interpretation of Pennsylvania’s reporting requirements, the use of Fr. McFadden as a go-between might free Archdiocese managers of the legal duty to report Msgr. Walls’ criminal behavior. (The Child Protective Services Act in 1988 required anyone who, in the course of their employment, came into contact with a child he suspected was abused, to report that abuse. Clergy were not explicitly included or excluded from this requirement. In 1995, the legislature made it explicit that clergy were included.) There is no evidence to show whether Fr. McFadden ever contacted the victim’s family.

Father McFadden may have been chosen to communicate with the victim’s family because he was well aware of Msgr. Walls’ problems. Eileen Egan’s client, Colleen, and her family had gone to Fr. McFadden shortly after Msgr. Walls had accosted her in 1986 in his rectory bedroom at Saint Matthias. In addition, according to an October 1990 letter from Msgr. James Meehan, Msgr. Walls’ subsequent pastor at Saint John Neumann, 11 people from Msgr. Walls’ previous parish, Saint Matthias, had protested to Fr. McFadden about Msgr. Walls’ “deviate sexual behavior” before the Archdiocese reassigned him in

1987. The parishioners told Fr. McFadden they thought Msgr. Walls needed to be institutionalized.

But Msgr. Walls had not been institutionalized. Instead, in June 1987, Cardinal Krol had quietly transferred Msgr. Walls' residence to Saint John Neumann in Bryn Mawr. At the same time, he promoted Walls to be Vicar for Catholic Education for the Archdiocese. It was eight months later that Eileen Egan informed the new Archdiocese administration about Msgr. Walls' abuse of her client.

**Monsignor Walls is returned to a parish residence after admitting sexual abuse of minors, despite his therapist's warning not to mingle with youth.**

Four days after receiving Eileen Egan's report of her client's abuse, Chancellor Shoemaker arranged for Msgr. Walls to go to Saint Luke Institute in Suitland, Maryland, for an evaluation. On March 14, 1988, Msgr. Walls began a ten-day evaluation. The Institute's assessment confirmed Msgr. Walls' earlier admissions.

The therapists, according to Fr. Welsh's notes, urged that Msgr. Walls "abstain from working w/ or mingling w/ youth or young adults in unsupervised capacity." Saint Luke staff also recommended a re-evaluation at the Institute in six to nine months. Monsignor Shoemaker told the Grand Jury that he sent this evaluation to Archbishop Bevilacqua. Nevertheless, Cardinal Bevilacqua allowed Msgr. Walls to live, unsupervised, in the rectory at Saint John Newman, a parish with a school.

**The pastor at Monsignor Walls' parish pleads with Archbishop Bevilacqua for guidance in supervising his resident, but the Archbishop ignores him.**

Upon Msgr. Walls' return to Bryn Mawr after his evaluation in March 1988, Msgr. James Meehan, his pastor, began writing letters to the Archdiocese describing his concerns about the priest and pleading for instructions from the Archbishop.

In a letter of April 11, 1988, to Chancellor Shoemaker, the pastor described Msgr. Walls' situation as "potentially explosive." He expressed extreme concern for the priest, the Church, "and others." He wanted Archdiocese managers to know that he was not in

regular or close contact with Msgr. Walls, and was not supervising him. Monsignor Meehan sent a copy of this letter to the Archbishop and requested a meeting with him.

On May 3, 1988, Archbishop Bevilacqua telephoned Msgr. Meehan in preparation for a meeting with Msgr. Walls the next day. The Archbishop's notes of the phone call record that Msgr. Meehan told him that "reports about Monsignor Walls are becoming more and more public," and that "several women have stated that he has been involved in" what the women characterized as "pedophilia."

The Archbishop also wrote that Msgr. Meehan expressed concerns about his responsibilities as pastor and about what Msgr. Walls was allowed to do. Monsignor Meehan had heard informally, while discussing another matter with Msgr. Shoemaker, that Msgr. Walls was not supposed to be celebrating Mass. Monsignor Meehan told the Archbishop that the Chancellor needed to tell Msgr. Walls not to perform Masses if that was the Archbishop's wish. Archbishop Bevilacqua recorded in his memo to the file that he told Msgr. Meehan he "would look into the matter."

Chancellor Shoemaker testified to the Grand Jury that the Archbishop did not thereafter ask him to instruct Msgr. Walls to refrain from celebrating Mass. The Chancellor said that, had he been asked, those instructions would have been communicated to Msgr. Walls verbally and in writing, with a copy in the file.

Monsignor Shoemaker told the Grand Jury that it was his understanding that the Archbishop was handling this matter himself. On May 4, 1988, Archbishop Bevilacqua met with Msgr. Walls. Rather than tell Msgr. Walls that he could not celebrate Mass, the Archbishop, according to his own notes, explicitly permitted the priest to "remain at St. John Neumann and continue to assist Monsignor Meehan . . . ." He later confirmed to the Grand Jury that he meant for Msgr. Walls to assist with parish duties, including saying Mass and hearing confessions, even of youth.

**Monsignor Walls is asked to resign his high-profile position as Vicar for Catholic Education, but continues to minister at Saint John Neumann for 14 Years.**

After hearing that reports about Msgr. Walls were becoming “more and more public,” Archbishop Bevilacqua, at his May 4, 1988, meeting with the priest, asked him to resign as Vicar for Catholic Education. According to his memo on the meeting, the Archbishop explained that Msgr. Walls could not continue in this high-profile position. He cited in particular “the fear that the parents of recent victims were not likely to take any action of a legal nature as long as the Archdiocese has acted strongly.”(Appendix D-20)

Having taken action to quiet the parents of Msgr. Walls’ victims, Cardinal Bevilacqua left the priest in residence at St. John Neumann for 14 more years. He did this knowing that Msgr. Walls would be working and mingling with young people in complete disregard of the St. Luke Institute’s recommendations. He left the priest in place without restrictions, supervision, or follow-up evaluations despite numerous reminders, warnings, recommendations, and pleas from Msgr. Meehan, Secretary for Clergy John J. Jagodzinski, and the Vicar for Delaware County, Msgr. Francis A. Menna.

Monsignor Walls’ pastor, Msgr. Meehan, continued to convey warnings and ask for direction. On August 22, 1990, he wrote to Msgr. Jagodzinski, who forwarded the letter to Archbishop Bevilacqua, that he felt he was “sitting on a keg of dynamite.” Monsignor Meehan told the Archdiocese managers that Msgr. Walls “leaves early in the morning and comes in around 10 or 11 at night.” In three years, he estimated, Msgr. Walls had eaten two meals at the rectory. The pastor wrote, “It is nearly impossible to know what his lifestyle is like.”

Monsignor Meehan’s letter referred to the Church’s recent problems with pedophilia and requested “for my own personal peace of mind, a statement in writing indicating exactly what my position is. Specifically, it would be extremely beneficial to have a diocesan lawyer outline the legal responsibilities to the people in the parish and the liabilities I might have if the matter should ever come to the attention of the press or become a future concern.” He concluded with a “P.S.” apologizing for the length of the letter, but stating: “as you know from our conversations, it leaves out much more than it includes.”

On September 26, 1990, prior to a parish visit by the Archbishop to St. John Neumann, Msgr. Jagodzinski sent a memo about Msgr. Walls’ situation to Vicar General

Edward P. Cullen, headed: "FOR INFORMATION OF THE ARCHBISHOP." In it, the Secretary for Clergy noted several "difficult and complicating factors," including: "the high profile nature of Msgr. Walls' earlier position"; "the extremely sensitive nature of the earlier accusations against him"; and "the continuing 'explosive' potential for future acting out."

Monsignor Jagodzinski pointed out that Msgr. Walls had been on "leave of absence," residing at St. John Neumann, since May 1988, and that his pastor, Msgr. Meehan, had repeatedly but unsuccessfully asked for some definition of his responsibilities. Monsignor Jagodzinski attached Msgr. Meehan's most recent plea, dated August 22, 1990. The Secretary for Clergy also forwarded for the Archbishop a letter from Msgr. Walls describing his parish activities, which included performing Mass, hearing confessions, counseling, and covering the parish when the pastor was away. The priest even reported that he was doing individual and group addiction counseling. Among the recommendations Msgr. Jagodzinski made to the Archbishop were: that Msgr. Walls "undergo full re-evaluation by Saint Luke's Institute, in accord with the Institute's recommendation in April 1988, that such re-evaluation take place 'in six to nine months'"; that Msgr. Meehan's role and responsibility in relation to Msgr. Walls be defined and communicated to Msgr. Meehan; and that, depending on the advice of therapists, Msgr. Walls be advised that he would be reassigned in the spring of 1991.

Archbishop Bevilacqua had Msgr. Cullen respond that the Archbishop needed more "background material on Monsignor Walls" before acting on Msgr. Jagodzinski's recommendations.

On October 1, 1990, Archbishop Bevilacqua had an opportunity to get more information and to deal with these issues when he made his parish visit. Afterwards, Msgr. Meehan wrote to his Regional Vicar, Msgr. Menna, expressing disappointment after again pleading for action: "The Archbishop's response, as best I can recall it, was 'these problems are serious and we cannot handle them as they were handled in the past.' He said no more."

In frustration, Msgr. Meehan attached a packet of information about Msgr. Walls to his October 25 letter to Msgr. Menna, and sent copies to Msgr. Jagodzinski. He wrote that he had learned about his resident priest's past not from the Archdiocese, but only because 11 parishioners from Saint Matthias, Msgr. Walls' previous parish, had insisted that another priest inform Msgr. Meehan about Msgr. Walls' "deviate sexual behavior." The Saint John Neumann pastor also informed the Secretary for Clergy that Msgr. Walls, shortly after arriving at his parish in June 1987, had "admitted to inappropriate affection with altar boys and a 'run-away girl' who came to the rectory on one occasion." Monsignor Meehan reported that Cardinal Krol, who had originally transferred Msgr. Walls to Saint John Neumann, had recently warned him that the pastor was "sitting on a keg of dynamite," referring to Msgr. Walls.

On November 12, 1990, Msgr. Jagodzinski sent a seven-page memo to Archbishop Bevilacqua summarizing Msgr. Walls' entire Secret Archives file. All of the information relating to his sexual abuse of minors had previously been provided to the Archbishop. Monsignor Jagodzinski's memo repeated the recommendations he had made in September 1990.

This time, Archbishop Bevilacqua responded by signing the memo: "Thanks for the report. AJB 11/24/90." None of Msgr. Jagodzinski's recommendations was followed. Archdiocese files reflect that Msgr. Walls continued to live at St. John Neumann, performing all of the functions of a parish priest, with full access to young people. He continued to counsel addicts without himself ever being reevaluated at Saint Luke or any other institution. There is no evidence that Cardinal Bevilacqua ever gave the requested guidance or instructions to Msgr. Meehan.

After receiving Msgr. Jagodzinski's memo in November 1990, Archbishop Bevilacqua gave his approval to Msgr. Walls' reentry into full-time ministry, but he was never assigned. The next year, the Archbishop approved of Msgr. Walls' serving as a consultant to Catholic Human Services on drug- and alcohol-related staff development issues. The priest's involvement, however, was reported to Secretary for Clergy William Lynn in 1994 as "minimal." In the absence of a formal assignment, Cardinal Bevilacqua did nothing to supervise or limit Msgr. Walls' ministry or living situation.

**A victim's abuse is reported again in 2002.**

In 2002, 14 years after Colleen's abuse was reported to Archbishop Bevilacqua, and nearly 12 years after Msgr. Jagodzinski had urged the Archbishop to take action, Colleen and her mother came to the Archdiocese.

Colleen told Secretary for Clergy Lynn and his assistant Fr. Welsh how Msgr. Walls had offered her a ride, driven her to a secluded spot, parked, and kissed the teen and fondled her breasts. She further told of the incident, reported in 1988 by Eileen Egan, when she went to Msgr. Walls' rectory at Saint Matthias to talk about problems at home and he turned off the bedroom lights, got the teenager on the floor, and asked her to have sex with him. Colleen's mother told Archdiocese managers, as Egan had, that Colleen's brother and another teenage boy were also subjected to Msgr. Walls' "advances."

According to a March 26, 2002, memo to Cardinal Bevilacqua from Secretary for Clergy Lynn, Colleen and her mother came to the Archdiocese because "other than [Walls'] removal from the Office of the Secretary of Education, it seemed to them as if nothing had been done." When Colleen called the Office for Clergy about a month later to check on Msgr. Walls' status, she was told he had moved from his Bryn Mawr residence. As recorded by Fr. Welsh in his notes of April 24, 2002: "In response to her question concerning whether he is in therapy and being monitored, I said he is continuing counseling and we will keep in contact with him." There is no record of contact with Msgr. Walls or with any counselor for more than two years after that promise was given.

**Cardinal Bevilacqua maintains before the Grand Jury that he had no knowledge that Monsignor Walls was involved with minors.**

On August 22, 2003, when Cardinal Bevilacqua was asked before the first grand jury why he left Msgr. Walls in residence at St. John Neumann performing the duties of a parish priest for 14 years after learning he had sexually abused minors, the Cardinal told the first grand jury: "This is the first time I hear that the allegations involved a minor." He told this to the grand jurors even though he had personally authored a memo recording Msgr. Meehan's report that parishioners were talking publicly about Msgr. Walls'

involvement in “pedophilia.” He persisted in this contention when confronted with a document in Archdiocese files that documented that Msgr. Walls had pursued sexually an adolescent female and was inappropriate in touching a young male.

The Cardinal tried to explain how he could still fail to realize that the girl who had brought the allegations was a minor. First he claimed that, because the document included no names, the adolescent girl mentioned in the report was not necessarily the victim who had made the allegations. He explained to the Grand Jury, “From this [report] I cannot deduce that either one of these was the accuser. You said now, right now, that the accuser was an adolescent. This is referring to two people, but no names.” Then Cardinal Bevilacqua claimed he had “never heard the expression” to “pursue sexually” and that he needed clarification of the phrase used in the Archdiocese’s document.

The Cardinal also testified that he “never knew” Msgr. Walls was performing all the parochial functions outlined in the priest’s letter to Msgr. Jagodzinski, dated September 24, 1990, which was forwarded to the Cardinal. Cardinal Bevilacqua claimed ignorance even though he had expressly authorized such parish assistance in his May 4, 1988, meeting with Msgr. Walls. He persisted with this claim despite Msgr. Jagodzinski’s memo to Msgr. Cullen, dated September 26, 1990, and entitled: “FOR INFORMATION OF THE ARCHBISHOP,” which attached Msgr. Walls’ letter detailing the duties he was performing in the parish. Indeed, the Cardinal persisted in downplaying the entire case, telling the Grand Jury: “You know, I don’t -- I can’t say that this was that of a high level that it should have been reported to me necessarily.”

Finally, the Cardinal was asked about a news interview in which he had claimed that the Philadelphia Archdiocese had suffered fewer problems with sexual abuse of minors than other dioceses because “we have taken a very firm stand here”:

“Q: Do you think, Cardinal, leaving a person who acknowledged sexual misconduct with a minor in a parish for fourteen years with, as we’ve already discussed, few if any restrictions on their abilities, would you consider that taking a very firm stand?”

A: I said that I had no recollection that he was involved with a minor.

Q: Well, your recollection notwithstanding, Cardinal, the documents supported—

A: I know that.

Q: -- that it was a minor, and so I'll ask you: With regard to what the documents show and with Monsignor Walls' own admission of his participation in the assault with minors, do you think it's a very firm stand to allow him to remain in a parish for fourteen years?

A: If it had been brought to my attention, you know -- you know, as it was recently, we would have -- we still would have gone by -- at the beginning, by what Saint Luke's Institute recommended.”

The Cardinal resorted to his two main explanations - he did not know, and he was just following the advice of the therapists. The Grand Jury finds that Cardinal Bevilacqua did know, and that he did not follow the therapists' advice.

Even after reviewing his own May 4, 1988, memo summarizing his meeting with Msgr. Walls, the Cardinal insisted that in May 1988 he did not know that the priest had abused minors. In that memo, Archbishop Bevilacqua had explained why he had told Msgr. Walls that he could not continue in his position as Vicar for Catholic Education:

*Among the more immediate reasons was the fear that the parents of recent victims were not likely to take action of a legal nature as long as the Archdiocese has acted strongly. Since he would not be away on an inpatient basis and if he is restored to his previous position as Vicar, it would appear that the Archdiocese had not considered this a serious matter and had taken no reasonable action. This perception of inaction could very well trigger the parents to resort to some kind of further procedure through court action. (Emphasis supplied)*

In addition to showing that Cardinal Bevilacqua knew the victim was a minor, the Archbishop's own words in this memo demonstrate that his primary concern was to create the *perception* that the Archdiocese was taking some kind of action, so as to dissuade parents from taking legal action against the Church – without doing anything meaningful to reduce the danger to parishioners. Archdiocese managers had no interest in removing

Msgr. Walls; however, faced with the threat of scandal, they were forced to act *as if* they were taking decisive action. Thus, Msgr. Walls was removed as Vicar, but not from ministry, because the Archdiocese was more protective of its shepherds than its flock.

**It remains unclear whether the Archdiocese is currently supervising Monsignor Walls.**

In September 2004, Father Michael Hennelly, an assistant in the Office of Clergy, sought to contact Msgr. Walls as part of an effort to begin monitoring priests no longer active in ministry because of sexual abuse of minors. There is nothing in the record before the Grand Jury to indicate that those efforts with respect to Msgr. Walls have been successful.

Father Walls appeared before the Grand Jury and was given an opportunity to answer questions concerning the allegations against him. He chose not to do so.