

Father Donald O' Connor

A bishop lies to his flock and the Feds

Imesch knew about numerous allegations for 20 years but he told Catholics in 2002 that news of abuse was a "shock"

Imesch even misled DOJ, saying there were no other allegations

Cleric allowed to stay in parishes for decades, where he continued to abuse

Father Donald O'Connor raised red flags among his superiors even before his 1964 ordination. In 1958, six years before the serial predator became a priest, O'Connor was sent for a mental health examination. The findings are unknown, but O'Connor was ordained anyway. Two years after becoming a priest, O'Connor abused boys and possibly drugged them to get access.

By 1980, Bishop Imesch knew that at least five boys had come forward alleging sexual abuse. Instead of calling the police about O'Connor—who by this time had been also accused of threatening his victims— Imesch let O'Connor keep his job as pastor in Braidwood, where he continued to molest minors.

In 2002, as a result of the Boston scandal and Dallas bishops' meeting, Imesch knew that he had to do something about O'Connor. After meeting with the priest and getting an admission, Imesch removed the cleric from active ministry. But in documents turned over to the Department of Justice and announcements to Catholics and the public, Imesch said that he had only just recently learned of a single allegation. He even went as far as to tell the DOJ that there were no other allegations of abuse against O'Connor.

O'Connor remained in the Braidwood area until his death in 2011.

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS – DONALD O'CONNOR

6/20/58 Letter from Fr. Ryan to Catholic Charities doctor asking for mental health examination of O'Connor.

6/13/64 – Assistant pastor, St. Rose, Wilmington

6/18/66 – Assistant pastor, Sacred Heart, Lombard

6/17/67 – Assistant pastor, Assumption, Coal City

1966 According to a 2005 report, O'Connor sexually abused an altar boy on one occasion. O'Connor took the boy to the Museum of Science and Industry and they stayed at a hotel after. When he awoke, he had no clothes on; he suspects he was given medications. There was shaving cream on his stomach with a smiley face on it and someone else in the room but he didn't know who because he was still drowsy. (491)

1967 According to a 2002 report, O'Connor sexually abused a 12-14 year old minor. The minor confronted O'Connor when he was 16 years old and was told that Bp.

Blanchette would not believe him and “its better than shacking up with a woman.”
(318-319)

6/1/70 – Assistant pastor, St. Rose, Wilmington

Approx. 1976 According to a 2002 report, O’Connor sexually abused a 15 year old boy at St. Rose Parish in Wilmington in 1976. (333)

6/16/75 – Pastor, Immaculate Conception, Braidwood

According to a 2002 report, O’Connor sexually abused an 11-13 year old altar boy on a fishing trip to Wisconsin. The victim later committed suicide. (334)

12/3/80 Report from Donnolly to Bishop by mothers that O’Connor attempted to molest four or five teenage boys. “Don has forced at least two boys on the bed in the rectory. One fought him off. The other result is vague.” Nun says that Don “cannot relate well with adults at their level ... tells kids to look at yourself in the mirror when naked.” (162)

12/5/80 Note from Imesch to Donnelly- meet with O’Connor personally to give him a chance to deny accusations. “If he admits it, he should be asked to see Fr. Watzhe (sp?) and report to you when this has begun... he should also be asked to agree to not have any young visitors in the rectory for any reason, not go on vacations or trips with them, no matter how many are going – unless there are other adults in the group. Violation of any of these conditions will mean removal from the parish.” (163)

12/8/85 Memo from Bp. Kaffer “O’Connor seems to have a fine relationship with the young people of the parish.” (171)

6/17/87 – Pastor, St. Bernard, Joliet

6/23/99 – Pastor, Assumption, Coal City

5/14/02 Imesch meets with a victim of O’Conner. O’Connor sexually abused the boy when he was 12-14 year old in 1967-1969, taking him out of school, on trips to Chicago and giving him gifts. The abuse happened on at least three occasions. (322)

5/16/02 Imesch meets with O’Conner to tell him of allegation. O’Connor admits that it occurred. Imesch relieves him of his assignment as pastor effective 5/18/2002 and removing his faculties. Imesch offers to contact St. Luke’s Institute if O’Connor wants to receive professional assistance. (322 - 323)

5/17/02 Media document prepared by DOJ on allegation of sexual misconduct against O’Connor states “there have been no prior allegations of sexual misconduct reported to us involving this priest” (404) and that “he has been removed from his position as pastor at Assumption parish and from all ministry.” (405)

- 5/21/02 Memo from Kaffer that he met with a former student who was sexually abused by O'Connor. According to the report, in approx. 1975, the boy went to an overnight with O'Connor where they played cards in their underwear. The winner was able to fondle the genitals of the loser. The boy did not want to touch O'Connor so he intentionally lost the game. He told O'Connor that he did not have to touch him but O'Connor insisted and masturbated him. The boy locked himself in the bathroom and never went back to the rectory.
- 5/22/02 Memo from Imesch that he spoke to the mother of a son whom O'Connor attempted to molest. (328)
- 5/18/02 – On administrative leave
- 6/20/02 Letter from DOJ to O'Connor at Assumption parish. (379)
- 2/2/04 O'Connor seen at Provena St. Joseph's Medica Center in clerical clothes despite restrictions. (471)
- 6/8/05 Memo from Kaffer that O'Connor put his name on the waiting list for St. John Vianney villa. (502)
- 7/24/06 Memo from Imesch to file that he met with O'Connor on July 19, 2006 regarding the 1966 allegation. O'Connor had no recollection of the events but say at times he took three-four boys together to the Museum of Science and Industry. (551)
- 2011 Deceased