

Joseph Fitzharris

One of the Vatican 400

Sent back to Chicago parishes after a 1987 conviction for abuse

When he admits abuse to the Archdiocese Review Board in 2005, they don't report to the police

Joseph Fitzharris is another example of the [Vatican 400](#), the 400 priests who have been laicized by Pope Benedict for child sexual abuse in 2011 and 2012.

Fitzharris was convicted of child sex abuse in 1987, and put on probation. Despite his conviction and probation, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin put the priest back into parish ministry at three Chicago-area parishes and a hospital, where Fitzharris continued to abuse. During this time, his “monitor” was Bishop Raymond Goerdert.

When things again got “too hot” for Fitzharris, he was moved to Notre Dame to study. The school and the student body were kept in the dark about Fitzharris’ past.

Instead of calling the police to start new criminal proceedings against Fitzharris, Bernardin removed Fitzharris’ faculties and told him he needed to live in a treatment facility for child-molesting clerics. Going a step further, Bernardin suggested Fitzharris “devote his ministry” to working with offenders. As late as 1993, church officials told Fitzharris that he could be eligible to reenter parish ministry. Fitzharris resigned from the priesthood in 1995.

By 2005, the priest admitted to the Archdiocese review board that he molested at least nine boys.

Despite all of this—a criminal conviction, re-offense, admission, and the statements of numerous victims—it takes the Vatican and Pope Benedict more than 6 more years to finally laicize Fitzharris

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS- JOSEPH FITZHARRIS

4/28/62 - Ordained

1962 – Associate Pastor, Saint Louise de Marillac, La Grange Park, IL

1967 – Associate Pastor, Saint Aloysius

1/2/69 Father George Aschenbrenner and future Archbishop John Vlazny write to Bishop John May (future Archbishop of St. Louis) that Fitzharris has a serious personality problem which calls for professional help. Unless Fitzharris gets

some professional help he is going to have serious problems. “If ever he is to mature and level off, I would suspect that this sort of attitude might well lead to much more serious difficulty in the future.” (AOC 001536)

1973 – Associate Pastor, Saint Fidelis

- 1975 According to Archdiocese summary from July 18, 2002, Fitzharris kissed and fondled a child in the shower. (AOC 000757)
- 1975 According to Archdiocese summary from July 21, 2002, Fitzharris fondled a minor between the ages of 10 and 11 at the minor’s home. (AOC 000755)
Probably same victim as previously mentioned (AOC 000757)

1978 – Associate Pastor, Saint Francis Xavier

- 1978 Fitzharris abuses minor male as reported to Father Tivy and Archdiocese on April 25, 2005. (AOC 000749)
- 1978 According to a 2005 report, Fitzharris provides alcohol, then fondled, masturbated and anally raped a minor boy multiple times at Saint Francis Xavier rectory. (AOC 000751)
- 1978 According to a report to the Archdiocese on February 12, 2002 Fitzharris fondled, masturbated, and oral or anally raped a minor boy. (AOC 000761)
- 1978 According to a report from August 13, 2007, Fitzharris fondled a minor boy. (AOC 002169)
- 1978-85 Fitzharris fondled, kissed, masturbated DT, DU, DV, DW and other boys while swimming and the Jacuzzi at the Midtown athletic club, according to an Archdiocese report on January 18, 2011. (AOC 002203)

1986- Associate Pastor, Saint Bartholomew’s, Waukegan, IL

- 11/12/86 Sister Mary Catherine, counselor at St. Gregory High school, calls Fr. Tom Ventura regarding sexual abuse of 16-year-old by Fitzharris. (AOC 000805)
Fitzharris put on a medical leave of absence. (AOC 001537)
- 11/19/86 Criminal complaint filed in Cook County against Fitzharris for criminal sexual abuse. (AOC 000724)
- 3/87 Fitzharris convicted in Cook County for sexual abuse of a minor, case no. 86-234071. (AOC 000723)

10/31/87 Fitzharris applies to Saint Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California for Sabbatical. (AOC 000795)

1988 – Associate Pastor, Saint Genevieve

- 1988 Bishop Raymond Goedert is assigned as Fitzharris' monitor. http://www.bishop-accountability.org/depo/2007_11_13_Goedert_Raymond/#139
- 3/11/88 Fr. Tom Maher informs Bishop Goedert that a boy went up with Fitzharris to his room. (AOC 000798)
- 5/10/88 Court supervision ended May 3. In one year the attorney can petition to have the entire record expunged. Bishop Goedert to Calendar in the case file. (AOC 000797)
- 5/23/88 Saint Patrick's Seminary Menlo Park, California declines Fitzharris Sabbatical request, saying: "We discovered your situation and after many consultations with our Board of Directors we do not feel our type of program would be helpful to you." (AOC 000795)

1989 - Associate Pastor, Saint Pascal's

- 4/18/89 Memo from Goedert to Fitzharris file on Notre Dame application: "I told him (Fitzharris) that I preferred not to do anything, as the minute I become involved, people right away know that there is something wrong". (AOC 000792)
- 12/2/89 Memo from Goedert to Cardinal Bernardin saying that Fitzharris is at Notre Dame and going to Saint Pascal's with Fr. Gary Miller. Miller is aware of Fitzharris' problems and Goedert will be meeting with him to go over responsibilities as on-site supervisor. (AOC 000789)
- 3/91 Contract between Fitzharris and Archdiocese forbidding contact with minors. (AOC 000784)
- 10/28/91 Cardinal Bernardin removes Fitzharris' priestly faculties based on a Psychic Infirmary invoking Canon 1044.2. (AOC 000729)
- 8/15/92 Individual Specific Protocol, ministry at Mercy Hospital and/or St. James Church (AOC 000779-AOC 000780)
- 5/11/93 Cardinal Bernardin, Fr. John Canary and Fr. Patrick O'Malley meet with Fitzharris regarding ministry working with sexual abusers at Trinity House. (AOC 000777)

- 6/2/93 Fr. O'Malley and Fr. Canary meet with Fitzharris regarding possibility of returning to ministry, need at least two years between time of the last incident and when he might be able, at the Cardinal's permission, to go before the Fitness Review Board. (AOC 00776)
- 2/19/94 Cardinal Bernardin acknowledges Fitzharris is working at St. Theresa Hospital. Cardinal wants Fitzharris at Servants of the Paraclete and possible permanent home. (AOC 00774)
- 3/1/94 Fitzharris assigned to Servants of the Paraclete Il Ritiro, Dittmer, Missouri in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis under Father John O'Neill S.S.J.
- 3/26/94 Fitzharris and his lawyer, Fr. Patrick Legges, meet with Fr. O'Malley and Fr. Cannary. Cardinal Bernardin proposes Fitzharris go to Evergreen Hills Wounded Brothers program in Missouri, Servants of the Paraclete in Cherry Valley, California, or Albuquerque, New Mexico. (AOC 00773)
- 5/28/94 Vicar for Priests, Fr. Patrick O'Malley, meets with Fitzharris in St. Louis. Fitzharris not happy at new assignment, Fr. John O'Neill S.S.J. reports that Fitzharris is a constant complainer. (AOC 00770)
- 7/4/94 Fr. O'Malley meets with Fitzharris at St. Mary of the Lake. (AOC 00769)

1/95- Fitzharris resigns from the Priesthood

- 2/5/03 Fitzharris admits to Bishop Paprocki and Fr. Grace that he had sex with 9 boys that but denies ever having anal sex with anyone. (AOC 00760)
- 6/1/04 Archdiocese meets with survivor of Fitzharris. (AOC 000750)
- 11/21/05 Fitzharris appeared telephonically before Archdiocesan Board. Fitzharris denied masturbating and ejaculating in a child's face. Fitzharris denied abusing anyone on trips to the Lake or pool. Fitzharris stated that these things may have happened but not by him. Responding to specific allegations by Vicar for Priests Father Edward Grace, Fitzharris stated that he "never had anal with anyone." There is no evidence that the review board reported this admission to the police. (AOC 000740)
- 11/13/07 [Bishop Goedert is deposed](#) in order to meet a non-monetary demand of sex abuse survivors. In the deposition, he admits to being Fitzharris' "monitor" when Fitzharris is put back into parishes after his criminal conviction for child sex abuse.

2011 - Laicized by Benedict XVI

