

Ralph Strand

Strand was convicted of child sex crimes

After serving 22 months in prison he still performed religious functions

Cardinal George allowed to him remain a priest, travel with children

Allegations against Strand date back to the mid-1960s, but no action was taken until 1986, when a victim threatened to sue. At the time, Strand denied molesting the child—although he did admit to numerous homosexual relationships with adults.

By 1993, there were mounting allegations against Strand from his time in both the United States and Rome. In response, Bishop Raymond Goedert said in a memo: “House Arrest is better than public disgrace.”

The Review Board put Strand on leave in 1993 and two months later, the priest was indicted.

Strand pled guilty to criminal sexual assault and served 22 months in prison. He was also put in the Illinois child sex offender database. Despite Strand’s incarceration and new allegations of abuse, Cardinal George decided in 1999 that Strand, now off parole, could wear his Roman collar and act as a priest.

In 2001, Strand traveled with youths in Mexico, even though the state required that he not live within 500 feet of schools. The Review Board, fearing scandal, required that Strand bring a companion any time he traveled with kids in the future.

When the press found out about Strand’s past in 2002, the Archdiocese said that Strand was living at Mundelein Seminary and working in the Vicar General’s office.

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS – RALPH STRAND

4/30/64 – Ordained

6/25/64 – Assistant Pastor, St. Eugene

1965 According to a 1999 report, Strand sexually abused a minor between 1965 and 1967. The abuse consisted of touching, grabbing the survivor’s genitals, and sodomy. (AOC 005482)

5/31/68 – Assistant Pastor, St. Simeon

1972 According to a 2004 report, Strand minor abused a survivor between approximately 1972 and 1974. The abuse consisted of fondling and groping. (AOC 005430)

1973 According to a 2004 report, Strand sexually abused a minor in 1973. The abuse consisted of touching, groping and other inappropriate acts. (AOC 005431)

6/11/75 – Associate Pastor, St. Thecla

6/8/81 – Associate Pastor, St. Francis Borgia

6/10/86 – Associate Pastor, St. Mary

3/28/86 Memo to Strand's file detailing an allegation of abuse of an adult man (age 19-22) by Strand that occurred from about 1983-1985. (AOC 005498)

1986 According to a 1995 memo, a civil suit was threatened in 1986 and Strand admitted to sexual activity with a young adult male at this time. At the same time Strand admitted to two other homosexual relationships, but denied sexual contact with minors. (AOC 005489)

8/1/91 – Pastor, St. Francis Borgia

6/28/91 Memo from Bishop Goedert to Cardinal Bernardin telling Bernardin that there was "a problem" in Strand's past, but he does not think it is necessary to withdraw Strand from his new assignment at St. Francis Borgia. (AOC 005496)

3/19/93 Summary of an allegation against Strand shows that the Board received an allegation of sexual abuse that occurred between 1990 and 1993. (AOC 005427- AOC 005428)

3/93 Notes from Bishop Goedert around this time note that the Archdiocese is aware of a charge while Strand was in Rome and another allegation of sexual abuse of a minor that took place in the last 5 years. Also details a meeting about the allegations that took place on March 26 at Strand's parish. In the conclusion, Goedert worries about the safety of children but also about Strand and his reputation. He writes: "Is there not some other way to protect children and at the same time not destroy the accused, e.g. leave the accused in place but assign a monitor... 'house arrest' is better than public disgrace." Remainder of memo questions the Archdiocese's policies in reporting to the states attorney's office and says "the church simply cannot win. We are damned no matter how we handle the issue." (AOC 005446- AOC 005449)

3/20/93 Minutes from Review Board meeting. The Board determined that there is reasonable cause to suspect that Strand engaged in sexual abuse of a minor. (AOC 005460)

3/22/93 – Administrative Leave of Absence

- 5/11/93 Proposed draft of a letter for Strand to send to Cardinal Bernardin as prepared by Fr. Patrick O'Malley saying that his previous letter of resignation was not meant to indicate an admission of guilt in the allegations of sexual abuse against him. O'Malley says that if Strand had conferred with his attorney he would have been clearer in the previous letter that he was not incriminating himself. (AOC 005453)
- 5/26/93 Strand indicted on charges he sexually abused a minor. (AOC 005489)
- 5/19/95 Memo regarding Strand's criminal accusations and upcoming trial. Says Strand will be given a copy of the protocols for the Archdiocese's funding of attorney's fees. Other considerations include that the trial will be public and the priesthood will come under heavy scrutiny. States that even if he is found innocent he will not be returned to ministry because the church's standards for fitness for ministry must be higher than the state's, "because of a reasonable suspicion that children are in danger and that these things did occur, the church will have to proceed with assessment, treatment, the whole process..." (AOC 005487- AOC 005488)**
- 6/17/96 Letter from Cardinal Bernardin to Strand about his "situation" and saying that he will not seek a canonical penalty against Strand. He cannot guarantee any public ministry for Strand in the future. (AOC 005445)
- 5/11/98 Letter from a survivor of sexual abuse by Strand to Fr. Thomas Paprocki reporting his abuse by Strand. The abuse consisted of making the survivor perform sexual acts while Strand and a nun had sex, grabbing the survivors genitals, and other inappropriate sexual acts. The survivor says that Fr. Cerniglia tried to confront Strand about the sexual abuse. (AOC 005438- AOC 005444)
- 8/24/99 According to a 2007 memo, the Archdiocese received an allegation of abuse by Strand and the matter came before the Board in Sept. 1999 and it found the allegations credible. The 2007 memo states that the allegation was not clearly documented after the Board determined there was reasonable cause to suspect the abuse occurred. (AOC 005424- AOC 005425)
- 11/3/99 Letter from Cardinal George to the Professional Fitness Board Administrator allowing Strand, since he is no longer on parole, to wear a collar at religious gatherings and events and relaxing other restrictions on Strand. (AOC 005436)**
- 1/10/01 Memo about Strand says a priest who was a chaperone to the seminarians who went to Mexico with Cardinal George talked to him about another priest, Strand, who was also on the trip and his close proximity to students and his "grooming behavior". Sneig is also sexually abused minors. The memo questions Strand's

presence on the trip and says a member of the press was there, who could have recognized Strand to the detriment of the Archdiocese. (AOC 005501- AOC 005502)

- 1/20/01 Minutes from Review Board meeting note that Strand engaged in “inappropriate behavior” with a 17 year old while traveling in Mexico. Board recommends making Strand’s travel contingent on having a companion. (AOC 005462)**
- 7/12/01 Memo to Cardinal George saying that The Mundelein police department visited Strand because he was living closer than 500 feet to Mt. Carmel School. Unless the law is changed Strand must move. “We will need to find a different location for priests who are convicted sex offenders.” (AOC 005500)**
- 3/14/02 Review Board summary on Strand says that three males alleged abuse by Strand that took place between 1964 and 1973. Strand served 22 months in prison for criminal sexual abuse of minors and was on parole until 1999. He lives in a monitored setting at Koenig Hall at Mundelein Seminary and works in the Vicar for Priests office. (AOC 005432)