

James Steel

Quickly laicized for “gambling issues,” not child molestation

The James Steel personnel file shows how easy it is for Cardinal George to laicize a priest. Steel, who had been accused of abuse and was pulled over by the police for soliciting a prostitute, had a long career of troublesome behavior, including sexually harassing female guests at a wedding.

But it was Steel’s alleged gambling problem and insubordination that had him finally laicized by Cardinal George ... with little problem.

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS – JAMES R. STEEL

5/2/68 – Ordained

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

11/11/68 – Associate Pastor, St. James Church

6/7/74 – Associate Pastor, St. Stephen Protomartyr

6/11/79 – Associate Pastor, St. Joseph the Worker

1982-1983 According to a 2006 Report, Steel sexually abused a minor while the minor was 14 years old. The minor was sexually abused by Donald Ryniecki and reported the abuse to Steel who proceeded to anally penetrate the minor on multiple occasions. (AOC 005090)

6/12/84 – Associate Pastor, St. John Brebeuf

1987 – St. Clement Parish

5/18/87 – Associate Pastor, St. Hilary

9/18/87 Letter from Fr. Darow to Vicar for Priests asking for Steel to be immediately removed from the parish. (AOC 005077)

4/20/88 – Associate Pastor, St. Bonaventure

5/7/89 Steel pulled over by law enforcement for soliciting a prostitute. (AOC 005066)

11/18/89 – Temporary Administrator, St. Bonaventure

1/11/91 Minutes of meeting state that Steel has left Bonaventure effective 1/8/1991 to go on leave.

- 6/3/91 Letter from Vicar for Priests to Steel stating that Steel is on a leave of absence expiring 7/31/1991 and that he will be presumed to be resigned from ministry if he does not consider treatment for his gambling addiction. (AOC 005041)
- 11/5/91 Memo of Vicar for Priest's conversation with Fr. Cimarrusti, pastor of St. Bonaventure stating that Steel had singled out three girls at a wedding party and was teasing them, kissing them and inviting them to the bar. (AOC 005040)
- 1/4/92 Vicar for Priests Memo stating that Steele can remain in priesthood if he undergoes in-patient treatment at St. Barnabas or St. Luke's. (AOC 005039)

5/13/92 – Left Active Ministry

- 5/22/92 Letter from Vicar for Priests to Fr. Pollard stating that Steel will no longer reside at Little Flower Rectory and the Archdiocese will not pay for his room as of 5/31/1992. (AOC 005038)

2001 - Laicized

- 10/6/05 Memo to McCluskey from Fr. Costello stating that there is no indication that Steel had a problem of a sexual nature with minors. (AOC 005028)