

THE DESERT SUN

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S SEXUAL ABUSE CRISIS

# Vatican sheltering fugitive priests

Many facing charges in U.S. live secluded lives in Rome

By REESE DUNKLIN  
THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

ROME — Pope John Paul II summoned U.S. cardinals to the Vatican two years ago, at the height of the church's sex-abuse crisis, and made a stirring pronouncement. "People need to know," he stressed to them, "that there is no place in the priesthood and religious life for those who would harm the young."

Yet today, one block from the Vatican, a fugitive priest lives in a church building with rooftop views of St. Peter's Basilica and the pope's apartment.

The Rev. Joseph Henn's superiors have let him stay with them, even though they say he has refused their instructions to go back to Phoenix and face charges that he molested three boys.

A short cab ride north, the Rev. Barry Bossa, an ex-con and fugitive, has found similar sanctuary in a leafy neighborhood of sidewalk cafes and low-rise apartments. His religious bosses hastily moved him out of the United States two years ago as his criminal record and new allegations began to emerge.

Here in the heart of Catholicism, church leaders are giving refuge to priests who face allegations of sexual abuse in other countries.

The Dallas Morning News located the men — some of them admitted abusers — as part of a yearlong investigation into the global movements of accused priests.

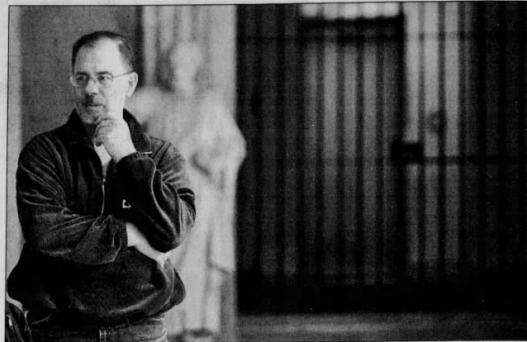
**Easy living**

Some are stationed in the comfort of their religious orders' world headquarters. One strolls by St. Peter's Square en route to his job. Another leads English-language tours at ancient church burial grounds. And until recently, one man was serving his house arrest across the street from the Vatican.

The priests would not discuss their cases at length. Their superiors said they did not assign the men to Rome to help them elude law enforcement or victims. The goal, they said, was to give the priests a place to live and work away from children.

"It's not the worst place in the world; that's true," said the Rev. Michael Higgins, the Passionist order's American leader. Last year, he sent to Rome a priest who had been investigated, but not prosecuted, on abuse claims. "But it's not a reward."

Several of the priests' superiors



**Indicted:** Father Joseph Henn, shown at his sanctuary in Rome, Italy, was indicted last year in Arizona on child-molestation charges. Henn's superiors have let him stay with them even though they say he has refused their instructions to go back to Phoenix and face charges that he molested three boys.

said they did not notify the Diocese of Rome about the men and were not obligated to do so because they were not staffing parishes. The bishop of the diocese is Pope John Paul II.

Of the seven accused priests The News located in Rome, Henn was the only one registered at the diocese's offices, according to the Rev. Marco Fibbi, a diocesan spokesman.

Neither Fibbi nor Henn's bosses would say whether the diocese was told about the criminal charges, which were filed after Henn arrived.

Fibbi referred further questions to the pope's chief Vatican spokesman even though none of the seven priests live within Vatican City. Joaquin Navarro-Valls did not respond to interview requests.

Navarro-Valls previously declined to comment on The News' investigation, which found more than 200 accused priests, brothers and other Catholic workers hiding across international borders and living in unsuspecting communities, often with the church's support. About 30 of the men were wanted by law enforcement in another country.

Prosecutors filed charges against Father Henn and Father Bossa last year and have asked the U.S. government to seek their extradition from Italy. State Department and Italian officials would not comment on the status of the requests.

One of those prosecutors, Maricopa County Attorney Rick Romney of Arizona was rebuffed last year when he asked the Vatican to use its authority to order two other fugitive priests to surrender. They had fled Phoenix for Mexico and Ireland.

**Rev. James Tully**

One sunny day this summer, the Rev. James Tully navigated his way past tourists in St. Peter's Square without interruption and headed for a yellow Vatican postal



**Tully**

box on the side of St. Peter's Basilica, where the pope regularly blesses the faithful.

Tully, who declined to be interviewed, was moved to Rome two years ago, about a month after he was accused of sexual misconduct for the third time. The priest had pleaded no contest to disorderly conduct in 1992 for giving three boys alcohol and grabbing one of them on the inner thigh during a baseball game in Milwaukee.

An official with Tully's Xaverian Missionary Fathers order said his transfer to Rome had nothing to do with abuse allegations.

The priest was recovering from the stress of working in war-torn parts of Africa, the official said, and was not ready for parish ministry in the United States.

A few miles south of the Vatican, the Rev. Richard Mataconis works as an English-language guide at the Catacombs of St. Callistus, a popular stop for Catholics visiting Rome.

Mataconis was sued two years ago by two men who accused him of abusing them in the 1970s at the New York junior seminary they attended. The suit ultimately was dismissed because the men had missed the deadline for filing a legal claim. The priest, a member of the Salesians of Don Bosco religious order, would not agree to an interview.

**Father Barry Bossa**

Father Barry Bossa was chatting in the second-floor hallway of his order's offices one afternoon when a doorman told him he had company. "A visitor? For me?" he replied enthusiastically.

His expression quickly turned sour, though. The visitor was a reporter, and Bossa was in no mood to discuss the abuse complaints against him. "My lips are sealed," he said before ducking into a room.

**The cover-up**

Bossa came to this urban neighborhood — dotted with shops and restaurants, and buzzing with well-dressed professionals — days after he abruptly left his parish in Yonkers, N.Y., two years ago.

The New York Archdiocese had learned that the priest pleaded guilty in 1974 to a reduced charge of misdemeanor sexual abuse — a detail his religious order, the Pallottines, had failed to share.

New York Cardinal Edward Egan stripped Bossa of his ability to minister in the archdiocese, and the priest departed Yonkers so swiftly that his sister had to come retrieve his belongings. At the time of the assault on a 12-year-old boy, Bossa was a lay Catholic teacher.

The Pallottines were aware of his conviction when he sought in 1976 to join the order, said the Rev. Terzo Vinci, a colleague who monitored Bossa in the United States.

The Pallottines accepted him because he promised not to re-lapse, Vinci said. As his criminal record was resurfacing in 2002, Bossa was hit with new allegations in Massachusetts.

Several men told the Boston Archdiocese that the priest had abused them in the mid-1970s, when they were young boys and he was teaching at a Bridgewater, Mass., parish.

Sometimes, he had sex with the boys after checking them out of grammar school and taking them to a nearby church office, according to records and interviews.

Massachusetts authorities filed criminal charges against Bossa in early 2003, several months after he had moved to Rome.

Vinci said the Pallottines are not trying to protect Bossa from authorities. They moved him to Rome to isolate him from children, Vinci said, and now he is unable to return to the United States because of his health.

**CORRECTIONS**

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