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Runaway priests hiding in plain sight

06:11 PM CDT on Monday, June 21, 2004

Catholic priests accused of sexually abusing children are hiding abroad and working in church ministries, *The Dallas Morning News* has found.

From Africa to Latin America to Europe to Asia, these priests have started new lives in unsuspecting communities, often with the help of church officials. They are leading parishes, teaching and continuing to work in settings that bring them into contact with children, despite church claims to the contrary.

The global movement has gone largely unnoticed -- even after an abuse scandal swept the U.S. Catholic Church in 2002, forcing bishops to adopt a "zero tolerance" policy and drawing international attention.

Starting this week and continuing in coming months, we report the results of a yearlong investigation that reaches all six occupied continents. Key findings include: Nearly half of the more than 200 cases we identified involve clergy who tried to elude law enforcement. About 30 remain free in one country while facing ongoing criminal inquiries, arrest warrants or convictions in another.

Most runaway priests remain in the church, the world's largest organization, so they should be easier to locate than other fugitives.

Instead, Catholic leaders have used international transfers to thwart justice, a practice that poses far g[illegible]er challenges to law enforcement than the domestic moves exposed in the 2002 scandal.

Police and prosecutors, however, often fail to take basic steps to catch fugitive priests.

Church discipline, such as the U.S. bishops' new policy, doesn't keep all offenders out of ministry. Dozens of priests who are no longer eligible to work in this country have found sanctuary abroad.

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Convicted sexual abuser and fugitive works with kids under his religious order's wing

02:49 PM CDT on Tuesday, July 13, 2004

By REESE DUNKLIN / The Dallas Morning News

APIA, Samoa – Frank! Frank!

About a dozen children circle around the Rev. Frank Klep after Mass one sun-kissed Sunday. They chirp his name, trying to catch his eye as he begins handing out foil-wrapped candy. He calls them by name, too, beams and hugs some of them.

Few, if any, locals are aware that the friendly priest is a convicted child molester who has admitted abusing one boy and is wanted on more charges in Australia. In 1998, his religious order placed him here in the South Pacific, where Australian police can't touch him because their country has no extradition treaty with Samoa.

Neither he nor the church feels an obligation to tell anyone about all that.

"I'd prefer to just leave it," Father Klep said recently. "If I felt I was still a risk to their children, then I'd think differently. But I don't think I am a risk anymore."

His order, the Salesians of Don Bosco, has long moved priests accused of sexual abuse from country to country, away from law enforcement and victims. Indeed, it is how many others in the Catholic Church have dealt with the problem, a yearlong *Dallas Morning News* investigation has found.

The Salesians, one of the largest Catholic religious orders, concentrate on educating and housing some of the world's most needy and vulnerable children. Yet influential Salesian officials have spoken out forcefully against cooperating with law enforcement agencies investigating sex abuse allegations.

Rev. Frank Klep hands out candy to Samoan children after Mass.

"For me it would be a tragedy to reduce the role of a pastor to that of a cop," Salesian Cardinal Oscar Rodríguez of Honduras, a prominent candidate to succeed Pope John Paul II, said at a 2002 news conference. "I'd be prepared to go to jail rather than harm one of my priests."

Salesian officials in Costa Rica and Chile are facing criminal complaints, accused of protecting priests who were shuffled across international borders. A judge in Chile is reviewing whether there is enough evidence to try a Salesian bishop on obstruction of justice charges, which would be the first such prosecution of a Catholic leader anywhere.

In the case of one priest from Peru, his superiors have ignored a church panel's 1995 demand that he have no contact with children, as well as a subsequent request from Chicago police to question him. Salesian officials in Peru say they don't know where he is, but *The News* found him working in Mexico – the fourth country he's been in since he was first accused of misconduct more than a decade ago.

Even the Rev. Pascual Chávez, before he became the Salesians' worldwide leader in Rome, kept an admitted molester in ministry in Mexico. After a judge dismissed criminal charges against the priest, he was reassigned to Africa. He has returned to duty in Mexico but could not be reached for comment. Father Chávez did not respond to interview requests.

One of Father Klep's alleged victims, himself a former Salesian seminarian, draws a painful conclusion about his old order:

"This is a corporate sin that they're feasting in," he said. "It must be the attitude of the Salesians worldwide."

Also Online

Overview: Runaway priests hiding in plain sight

'Best of our ability'

Father Klep is living in exile in Samoa, "not a paradise or a tropical resort," according to his boss, the Rev. Ian Murdoch, the order's leader in Australia and the South Pacific. The priest has no active ministry or unsupervised contact with children, Father Murdoch said, and is monitored to "the best of our ability."

"The Salesians as a community have done their best to respond to the allegations," he said before refusing to answer further questions.

But Father Klep enjoys his ministry on this tiny island nation. People here still respect their elders and honor the Sabbath. He's surrounded by a colorful, exotic landscape of orchids, poinsettias, and mango, banana and coconut trees. He has picturesque views of the blue Pacific waters and Mount Vaea.

"I have found a good measure of contentment," he said. "I'd be quite happy to stay here."

Father Klep's victims in Australia have tried unsuccessfully for years to have him removed from the priesthood. A church panel that recently investigated one abuse complaint asked the Salesians to consider suspending his ministry, but not even his admission in that case led to significant discipline.

"I made a mistake," Father Klep said in an interview, acknowledging that he touched one of his Australian students in the late 1970s. Two years ago, he wrote a letter to the former student, who is now an adult, and expressed his regret.

The priest's penance was loss of his ceremonial title: "priest in charge" of the order's offices near Apia, the Samoan capital. The former student said it wasn't enough.

"Prison is the only punishment deserving of this man," he said. "All along the way he's been protected, and no one seems to think it's serious enough."

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Druggings denied

The complaints against Father Klep date to the 1970s, when he worked at a boarding school north of Melbourne. At the time, Salesian College at Rupertswood was exclusively for boys, many of whom were from the farming communities in rural Victoria state.

The first boys came forward in about 1986, telling their parents that Father Klep had molested them. By then, they were young adults, and Father Klep was the school's principal.

Three former students told *The News* that the abuse occurred when they went to Father Klep in the infirmary for pain medication or prescriptions. He sexually assaulted them, the students said, while they lay sick or after he had given them incapacitating drugs.

"I remember being wasted out the next day," said the former seminarian. He and the other former students spoke on condition they not be named.

Contact Us

Do you have information about this issue? Please contact us at 214-977-8118, or e-mail us at runawaypriests@dallasnews.com

About a dozen parents confronted the Salesians and the Archdiocese of Melbourne in a series of meetings. One of the parents, the former seminarian's mother, said church officials were dismissive. She recalled a Salesian leader telling her: "This all happened very long ago. It has no foundation."

But when her husband threatened to sue, she said, within days Father Klep was pulled from the job.

Father Klep denied knowing about any of the complaints or drugging anyone. He said his supervisor described the departure as a routine sabbatical. "Maybe he was being charitable to me," the priest said.

The Salesians sent him overseas, first to an order facility in Rome for a few months, then to the United States. He enrolled in late 1987 at Fordham University, a private Catholic school near the Salesians' offices in New York City, and pursued a master's degree. While studying, he also helped at Masses in the area, he said.

Shortly after he graduated in early 1989, Father Klep returned to Australia. Within a few years, he was the top official at a youth center and hostel in a blue-collar suburb of Melbourne.

The mother of the former seminarian said she and the other parents were horrified. She complained in writing to the Salesians in 1992 and drew a scolding from the order's regional leader at the time, the Rev. Julian Fox. She dropped her protests.

"I just tried to do the right thing, but we never got anywhere," she said. "They absolutely had it covered like the Mafia."

Father Fox said in an interview this month that he investigated but couldn't remember what he found because the details were "history under a bridge."

Father Fox also has been accused of sexual abuse while working at the boarding school in the 1970s and 1980s. He, too, was transferred abroad – to Fiji for several years and recently to the order's Rome headquarters. The Salesians paid Father Fox's accuser a settlement.

Father Fox said a church review had exonerated him. "That's in the past. I'm not keen to be trolling through all of that again," he said, cutting off the interview.

Going to police

Starting in 1993, more young men alleged that Father Klep had abused them at the school. But these former students went to authorities.

First, two brothers complained to Victoria state police, whose area includes Melbourne. Officers filed four charges of indecent assault against Father Klep, dating to 1976 and 1979.

"He forced himself on them," said Senior Sgt. Steve Iddles, the prosecutor in the case. "Lie down and do as I tell you."

Father Klep denied touching the brothers. He accused them of fabricating much of their story to get money from the Salesians. He pleaded not guilty, and the Salesians left him on duty throughout his proceedings in 1994.

"At one stage in the trial, my defense asked them pertinent questions, and one of them shed a few tears," he said recently. "I thought they were crocodile tears."

The judge declared Father Klep guilty and sentenced him to nine months of community service. The priest worked off his sentence gardening at nursing homes.

One of the brothers said he was let down by the criminal justice system.

"When a man is charged on four counts and convicted on four counts and doesn't go to jail," he said, "you have to wonder what's behind it."

Not long after Father Klep finished his sentence in early 1996, another former student reported to Victoria police that in 1973 the priest fondled him and performed oral sex on him. Detectives questioned and fingerprinted Father Klep but did not arrest him.

Once again, Father Klep denied the allegations and accused the former student of trying to get money. The possibility of being prosecuted a second time worried him, though, he said.

So in 1998, with the investigation unresolved, he readily accepted a reassignment to Samoa. He said the move was the suggestion of his boss at the time, the Rev. John Murphy.

"I think he realized that I'd probably feel a bit more comfortable being removed from the situation there," Father Klep said. "I was happy enough to go."

Father Murphy, who's now assigned to Samoa as well, said the priest's account was "not altogether true" but wouldn't elaborate. He referred questions to Father Murdoch, who declined to comment.

Later in 1998, police sought to question Father Klep again and discovered that he had left for Samoa. They charged him with five counts of indecent assault and issued a nationwide arrest warrant.

"In hindsight, it'd been better if we charged him on the day" he was questioned in 1996, said investigator John Raglus, one of the Victoria officers now assigned to the case. He said he couldn't explain why it took authorities more than two years to file charges.

Case files show that Australian Federal Police were supposed to contact Samoan authorities on behalf of Victoria, according to Mr. Raglus. But two officials in the Samoan government said the Australians told them nothing about Father Klep.

"I had no idea," said Samoa Assistant Attorney General Raymond Schuster.

Australian Federal Police would not answer written questions about the matter.

For some, life goes on

Beyond the reach of police and church discipline, Father Klep has worked freely.

He is the top financial official at the Moamoa Theological College, a two-story colonial-style house where seminarians and lay religious teachers train and reside. He helps during Mass at St. Anthony Church, one of the area's oldest and more prestigious, and at the nearby Salesian schools.

For a time, he supervised the Rev. Jack Ayers, who was accused of raping a student at the Rupertswood boarding school in the 1960s. The Salesians paid the accuser a settlement in 2000, according to documents *The News* obtained. Father Ayers, who refused to comment, lives a few doors from Father Klep at the college.

Samoa's top Catholic, Archbishop Alapati Mataeliga, said he was startled to learn about the abusive pasts of both priests. He said the Salesians should not have kept the details from him.

"I think we have to do something about it; justice has to be served," said Archbishop Mataeliga, who became leader of the archdiocese last year. "Samoa should not be a place where they send priests like that."

But the archbishop changed his mind after speaking with the Salesians. He said Father Klep told him that what happened was an accident. And ' 'iscussed Father Ayers with Father Murphy.

"Although these incidents happened with these two priests, they have dealt with it themselves and with their congregation," the archbishop's secretary wrote in a letter. "They are valid and allowed to work in our archdiocese, and we are grateful for their services and hard work up to this point."

The company of teens

Upstairs, in the theological college's kitchen, Father Klep sat at a table and explained that when he gave candy to children after Mass the previous day, it was a spontaneous gesture. He still enjoys "young people's company," he said, but limits his contact mostly to adults.

Downstairs, a group of teenage boys lounged on concrete steps, waiting for Father Klep.

One young man said he met Father Klep this spring when the priest pulled up at a bus stop where he was standing and offered him a ride. At the end of the short drive, Father Klep gave him some cash and invited him to church.

Since then, the 19-year-old said, Father Klep has "come to where I hang out in the evenings" and offered him small jobs around the college.

Also waiting on the steps was a 14-year-old who said he has known Father Klep for about a year and a 13-year-old buddy he said the priest wanted to meet.

The 14-year-old said Father Klep has given him spending money and regularly helped him with schoolwork alone in the priest's bedroom.

"He says to me, 'Any day I want help, I come to Father Frank's home,'" said the boy, who had a thin adolescent mustache and a shy demeanor.

er Klep has even paid his tuition to Chanel College, a Catholic school near the priest's home, he said.

"He said to me, 'You are my best friend.'"

Staff writer Brendan M. Case in Mexico City and special contributor Andrew Fa'asau in Apia contributed to this report.

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Accused priests stay close to Rome

01:37 PM CDT on Monday, September 13, 2004

By REESE DUNKLIN / The Dallas Morning News

One in an occasional series

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.

Special Report

Runaway Priests: Hiding in plain sight

Multimedia: Runaway priests hiding in plain sight, Part II

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.

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 supervisors 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.

Also Online

En español: Bajo la sombra del Vaticano

"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."

A former top administrator at a Catholic college near the Vatican said placing accused and even fugitive priests in Rome was "very detrimental" – especially at a time when the church is trying to restore its battered image.

"I don't think they understand taking those people over there is a scandal," said the Rev. Lawrence Breslin, a retired priest who was the second-in-command at Pontifical North American College. "Rome is the center of the church. People see it as a holy place. It is not a place for harboring criminals."

Several of the priests' superiors 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, Father Henn was the only one registered at the diocese's offices, according to the Rev. Marco Fibbi, a diocesan spokesman. Neither Father Fibbi nor Father Henn's bosses would say whether the diocese was told about the criminal charges, which were filed after Father Henn arrived.

Father Fibbi referred further questions to the pope's chief Vatican spokesman, Joaquín Navarro-Valls. He did not respond to interview requests.

Dr. 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 are seeking their extradition from Italy. State Department and Italian officials would not comment on the status of the requests. The extradition process can sometimes take years to complete.

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

The prosecutor's letter to the Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Angelo Sodano, was sent back resealed, along with a note: "The item, here enclosed, is returned to the sender because refused by the rightful addressee."

Mr. Romley said he saw no point in writing to the Vatican when Father Henn was indicted about a month later. He understands that the Vatican has no authority to extradite Father Henn, but he believes it could use its church power to pressure the priest to return to Phoenix.

"Clearly there are formal charges here," said Mr. Romley, who was raised a Catholic. "They [priests] give a vow of obedience. It seems like it is real easy to say, 'You shall return, and if not, we defrock you.' "

President Bush's chief representative to the Vatican – the only religious institution recognized as a sovereign nation – refused to comment on its handling of clergy abuse matters. Ambassador Jim Nicholson "does not comment on church business," his spokeswoman said.

Slow to act

Despite the pope's tough talk, the Vatican has moved slowly in dealing with a scandal that has cost the church hundreds of millions of dollars in payments to victims and led to the resignations of several bishops who sheltered priests.

Shortly after the pope met with the cardinals in spring 2002, leaders of the U.S. church gathered in Dallas and passed an aggressive "zero tolerance" policy for molesters. But the Vatican balked, saying several parts of the policy were not in line with church law, and ordered changes. Among them: imposing a deadline for complaints, which in effect allows many abusers to go unpunished.

Even after Rome and the U.S. bishops hashed out the policy's details, the Vatican continued to employ an acknowledged abuser as a foreign diplomat. The Vatican had promoted the Rev. Daniel Pater despite his 1995 financial settlement with an Ohio victim and two warnings from Monsignor Breslin. Then in late 2002, it moved him up again, this time to temporarily run the papal embassy in India. He stepped down last year, as *The News* was preparing a story about the case.

And the Vatican has kept former Boston Cardinal Bernard Law, the U.S. church leader most associated with protecting priests, on several decision-making panels and recently gave him a job leading a historic Roman basilica.

"There is this gulf between saying the right thing but not appropriately following through with the right actions," said Brother Barry Coldrey of Australia, a church historian who has written extensively about clergy abuse.

Four years ago, the Vatican made Brother Coldrey, a member of the Christian Brothers order, remove from the Internet his book, *Religious Life Without Integrity: The Sexual Abuse Crisis in the Catholic Church.* A Vatican letter to Brother Coldrey said: "We question the prudence of publishing such a document."

"The response should be cleanup," Brother Coldrey said, "but it is still all too often cover-up."

The Vatican has long refused to address why it has not acted on numerous abuse complaints made against a close ally of the pope, the Rev. Marcial Maciel, the revered founder and leader of the Legion of Christ order in Rome.

Two of his nine accusers appealed several times to the Vatican in the 1970s and 1980s, with no results. The Vatican finally agreed in 1999 to review the alleged incidents, which the men said happened in Spain and Italy when they were young boys and seminarians. But a few months later, the Vatican mysteriously suspended the inquiry without ever taking testimony from the men, according to *Vows of Silence*, a new book by Jason Berry and Gerald Renner, investigative journalists who first reported the Maciel saga.

Alberto Athié, a former priest who had worked at a charity run by Mexico's bishops, told *The News* that his career stalled after he notified Mexico City Cardinal Norberto Rivera and Vatican Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger about the allegations against Father Maciel. The cardinals wouldn't comment.

"I was told that Maciel was very beloved of the pope, that he had done a lot of good for the church, and that it wasn't convenient to do anything to look into the accusations," said Mr. Athié, who subsequently quit the priesthood.

Father Maciel, who has repeatedly declared his innocence, continues to enjoy support from John Paul. The pope celebrated the Legion's 60th anniversary in St. Peter's Square in 2001 and told a crowd: "I extend a particularly affectionate greeting to your dear founder, Father Marcial Maciel, whom I heartily congratulate at this significant juncture."

'Lost in the crowd'

The sidewalks and streets around the Vatican are brimming with clergy, seminarians and Catholic pilgrims of all nationalities. Cardinals and bishops, in their scarlet and purple vestments, meander through the scores of people. Police cars whiz by occasionally, escorting limousines with foreign dignitaries into the Vatican.

"You can stand out there in St. Peter's Square and hear 50 languages spoken. You're just lost in the crowd," said Monsignor Breslin, the former college administrator in Rome. "No one will look at you and think you're a criminal."

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 box on the side of St. Peter's Basilica, where the pope regularly blesses the faithful. Father Tully dropped in a couple of letters, then walked on to a nearby bus stop.

Father 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. Father Tully's therapist wrote a letter during that case in which he said the priest "had never denied responsibility for his sexual behavior."

An official with Father Tully's Xaverian Missionary Fathers order said his transfer to Rome had nothing to do with abuse allegations. The pri 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. He mingles with the adults and children on his tours, talking them through the ancient burial sites of popes and Catholic martyrs.

Father 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. Salesian officials said they could not discuss the accusations, the circumstances of his transfer to Rome or his current assignments, citing pending litigation against the order.

"We trust that you understand our position," their attorney said.

Not talking

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 Father Bossa was in no mood to discuss the abuse complaints against him.

"My lips are sealed," he responded emphatically to a few questions, before ducking into a room.

Father 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 Father 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, Father 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 Father Bossa in the United States. The Pallottines accepted him because he promised not to relapse, Father Vinci said.

As his criminal record was resurfacing in 2002, Father 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 Father Bossa in early 2003, several months after he had moved to Rome.

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

"It's not a promotion," he said. "Possibly some lay people have this perception, 'He went to Rome. Oh, he's with the pope.' He went to Rome in exile. Zero promotion. Zero anything."

One of the four accusers in the Massachusetts criminal case said he was surprised when he learned that the Pallottines had given Father Bossa a home in Rome.

"Right there, right by the pope. Nice," said the man, who spoke on the condition he not be named. "You would think they would want them out of there."

(r lets him stay

Each day, the tourists walking to St. Peter's Square pass the Salvatorian order's world headquarters and its signature large green double doors.

Father Joseph Henn, a fugitive, lives behind those doors. He comes and goes easily, just one more anonymous person on Rome's streets.

His accommodations are pleasant. The headquarters' first floor has a tranquil garden courtyard with a fountain and begonias, a hotel and a tourist information center. Upstairs are offices, a chapel and a large kitchen and cafeteria, where the pope ate lunch during a visit a few years ago. And the rooftop patio offers a panoramic view of imposing St. Peter's Basilica and other Roman landmarks.

Father Henn already was living here, doing administrative work, by the time authorities began targeting him last year as part of a broader abuse investigation into the Phoenix Diocese.

Church officials had received complaints long ago from parents that he was fondling their sons, records show. The diocese had even made a confidential payout to one accuser in the early 1990s. But those allegations were not forwarded to law enforcement, according to the Maricopa County attorney's office.

When a reporter approached Father Henn in the courtyard, he was exasperated by questions about his criminal case and his life in Rome.

"I was hoping the lawyers had worked to make sure that everything was sort of finished," he said, declining to specifically address the allegations. "What I'm a little bit frustrated [about] is you may be opening everything back up to prosecution."

Salvatorian officials would not agree to an interview or address when and why Father Henn was sent to Rome. They said in a written statement that it was their "clear expectation" that Father Henn would heed their request to go back and answer the 13-count indictment against him.

F s refused. And the order has let him stay.

"That doesn't sit well with me," said one of Father Henn's accusers, Rick Rivezzo, who is suing the Phoenix Diocese. "He knew what was going on, and he was there for a reason – to hide."

Mr. Romley, the prosecutor, said his office tried to talk Father Henn into returning voluntarily. The costly, cumbersome process of extradition

is the only resort now. Mr. Romley knows from experience that he can't count on the Vatican's help.

"It doesn't seem like they're putting forward the very best foot to really make a difference and say, 'You will be held accountable, and this is not going to occur again,' " he said. "And that's the bottom line."

Staff writer Brendan M. Case and special contributor Anna Zammit in Rome contributed to this report.

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Samoa moves to deport fugitive priest

03:05 PM CDT on Wednesday, June 23, 2004

By REESE DUNKLIN / The Dallas Morning News

The Samoan government, prompted by a *Dallas Morning News* investigation, is moving to deport a fugitive Catholic priest because he failed to disclose his conviction in a previous child molestation case when entering the country.

The priest's superiors in the Salesians of Don Bosco religious order also face an immigration inquiry because they, too, failed to make the same disclosures, said Auseuga Poloma Komiti, the senior adviser to Samoa's prime minister and Cabinet.

Samoan authorities will serve the Rev. Frank Klep a deportation order Wednesday afternoon Dallas time that gives him three days to leave voluntarily or seek an appeal, said Mr. Komiti.

If he goes without a fight or loses an appeal, he'll be forced back to Australia, where he is the subject of a nationwide arrest warrant on five indecent assault charges. Samoan officials said they would coordinate Father Klep's return with Australian authorities.

"We can't help but think what was foremost was to have Father Klep evade the law by assigning him overseas," said Mr. Komiti. "They were not thinking or giving two hoots about the children of this country."

Father Klep moved to the South Pacific island nation in early 1998 while he was a target of a criminal abuse investigation in the Australian state of Victoria. He told *The News* his Salesians superior at the time suggested the reassignment because "I think he realized that I'd probably feel a bit more comfortable being removed from the situation there" in Australia.

The superior, the Rev. John Murphy, has said the priest's version of events was "not altogether true," but declined to elaborate.

The Salesians' present leader for Australia and the South Pacific, the Rev. Ian Murdoch, also has refused to discuss Father Klep's move.

But in a written statement earlier this week, Father Murdoch said the Salesians have not moved priests accused of sexual abuse from country to country "for the purpose of shielding them" from police. He said that the Salesians "have co-operated, and will certainly continue to cooperate, with any law enforcement agency."

Father Murdoch also continued to insist that Father Klep has no contact or ministry with children. But *The News* observed and photographed him handing candy to children after a Sunday Mass and interviewed teenage boys who said Father Klep had regular interaction with them - from giving them money to tutoring one of them alone in his bedroom.

When Father Klep first arrived in Samoa, he was required to fill out immigration papers stating whether he had any criminal convictions, Mr. Komiti said. But, he added, Father Klep "did not state anything."

In 1994, Father Klep was convicted on four charges in the assaults of two former students at a Salesians boarding school outside Melbourne during the 1970s.

After he finished his sentence of community service, he came under investigation again. He was questioned and fingerprinted in 1996 but not arrested. While the case lingered, he moved to Samoa.

Later in 1998, Victoria police filed five additional charges against him and issued an arrest warrant but did not seek extradition. Victoria

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officials previously told *The News* that Australia had no formal treaty with Samoa agreeing to the exchange of fugitives.

However, Australian federal authorities this week told *The News* that Victoria police have never asked them for help. They said they could h sought Father Klep's return even if the two countries did not have an extradition treaty.

Victoria police said the case is under review and declined further comment.

Beyond Father Klep, the Samoan government is investigating whether the Salesians had a legal obligation under immigration laws to report Father Klep's criminal record when they sponsored his move to Samoa. If they did, Salesian officials could face penalties including fines or expulsion as well, said Mr. Komiti.

But aside from a legal mandate, Mr. Komiti said, "There was a moral imperative to do so. We were disappointed. We have this feeling of being betrayed."

Victoria police have not answered questions from *The News* about whether they would investigate the Salesians' role in Father Klep's departure to Samoa.

The Salesians apparently did not tell Samoa's top Catholic leader about Father Klep's 1998 criminal warrant, either.

Archbishop Alapati Mataeliga's secretary told *The News* that Father Murdoch had informed local church leaders about the 1994 conviction, but did not fully divulge details of the 1998 charges.

"My recollection of our conversation is that he mentioned something like, that they were not in possession of any warrant of arrest, or some wording like that," said the archbishop's secretary, Puletini M. Tuala.

Mr. Tuala said the archbishop was reconsidering his previous decision to let Father Klep remain in Samoa. The archbishop had told Samoan and Australian reporters that he might force Father Klep out of his archdiocese within a day or two.

Two weeks ago, however, the archbishop had a much different tone.

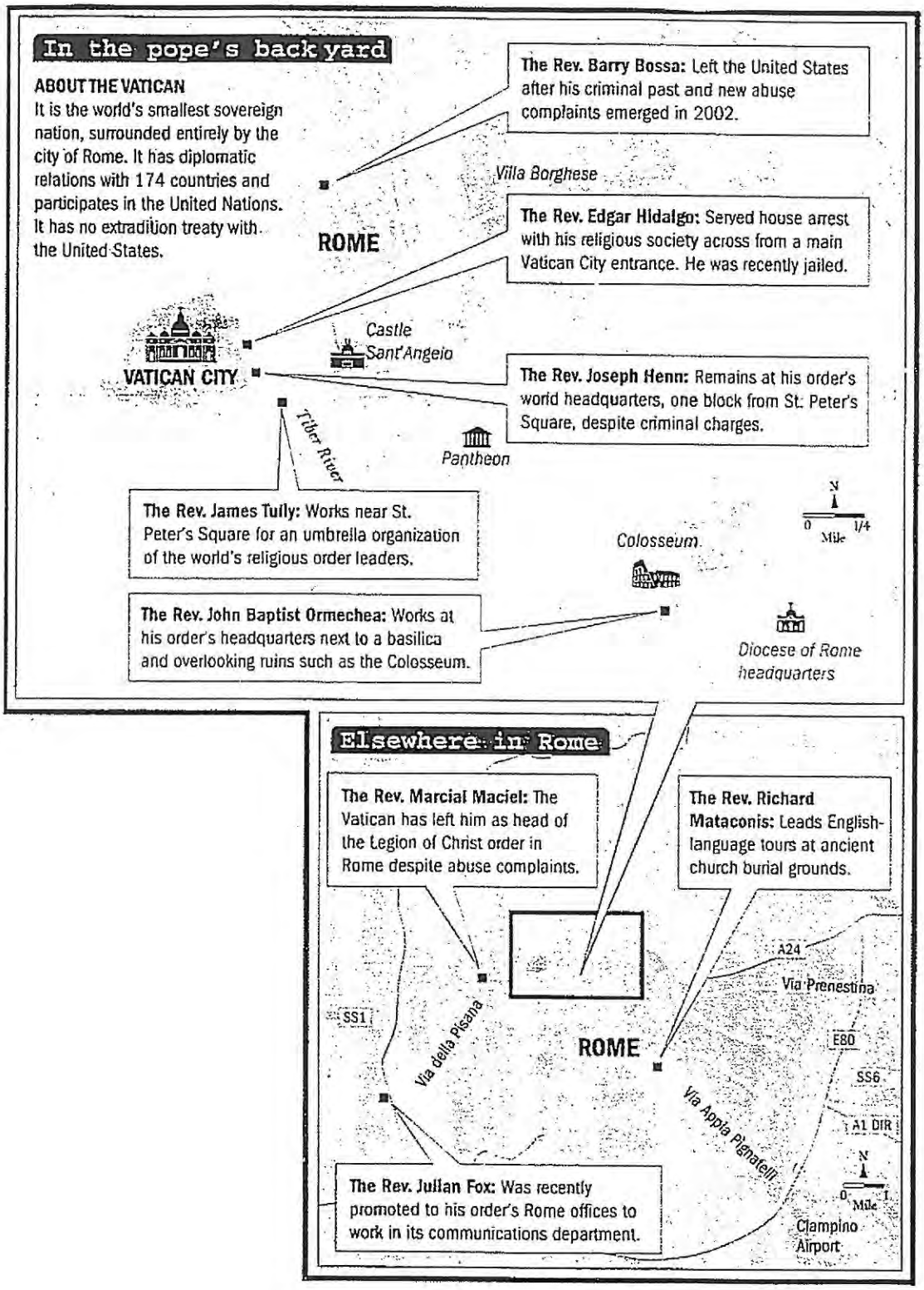
His secretary wrote in a letter to *The News* that the archbishop was satisfied after speaking to the Salesians and Father Klep, who admitted abusing one boy but called the incident an accident.

The archbishop also decided that a second Salesian priest who was moved to the island despite an abuse case in Australia could remain. The Salesians paid the Rev. Jack Ayers' accuser a settlement, according to documents *The News* obtained.

"Although these incidents happened with these two priests, they have dealt with it themselves and with their congregation," Mr. Tuala wrote in a letter. "They are valid and allowed to work in our archdiocese, and we are grateful for their services and hard work up to this point."

The Samoan government is also investigating Father Ayers' entry into Samoa, Mr. Komiti said.

Online at: http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/longterm/stories/062304dnprodlep.28de9ddab.html


In the pope's back yard
ABOUT THE VATICAN
It is the world's smallest sovereign nation, surrounded entirely by the city of Rome. It has diplomatic relations with 174 countries and participates in the United Nations. It has no extradition treaty with the United States.
The Rev. Barry Bossa: Left the United States after his criminal past and new abuse complaints emerged in 2002.
Villa Borghese
ROME
The Rev. Edgar Hidalgo: Served house arrest with his religious society across from a main Vatican City entrance. He was recently jailed.
Castle Sant'Angelo
VATICAN CITY
The Rev. Joseph Henn: Remains at his order's world headquarters, one block from St. Peter's Square, despite criminal charges.
Tiber River
Pantheon
The Rev. James Tully: Works near St. Peter's Square for an umbrella organization of the world's religious order leaders.
N
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1/4
Mile
Colosseum
The Rev. John Baptist Ormechea: Works at his order's headquarters next to a basilica and overlooking ruins such as the Colosseum.
Diocese of Rome headquarters
Elsewhere in Rome
The Rev. Marcial Maciel: The Vatican has left him as head of the Legion of Christ order in Rome despite abuse complaints.
The Rev. Richard Mataconis: Leads English-language tours at ancient church burial grounds.
A24
Via Prenestina
SS1
Via della Pisana
ROME
E80
SS6
Via Appia Pignatelli
A1 DIR
N
0
1
Mile
The Rev. Julian Fox: Was recently promoted to his order's Rome offices to work in its communications department.
Ciampino Airport