

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS REGARDING PETER BURNS¹

5/12/86 Weakland letter to Burns appointing him Associate Pastor at St. Peter Claver in Sheboygan effective June 17, 1986. (11444)

5/17/86 – Ordained

6/17/86 – Associate Pastor, St. Peter Claver Parish, Sheboygan, WI

1/16/87 Braun (priest at St. Peter Claver) reported to police that Burns touched a boy's penis while child slept at rectory. Police interviewed the boy and his mother. Family indicated they did not feel police involvement would be necessary and that Braun would take care of the matter within the church, would pass along the information to the Archbishop, and see to it that Burns received proper counseling. Officers advised it would be in family's best interest if police were involved, but mother was satisfied with Church's response. (11112-11113)

6/11/87 Sklba letter to Burns enclosing check for \$100 as assistance in meeting some of the counseling needs experienced by Burns' "little brother." (27863)

1/10/89 Gross letter to Burns appointing him temporary administrator of St. Peter Claver Parish, Sheboygan, effective immediately. (11097)

1/10/89 – Temporary Administrator, St. Peter Claver Parish, Sheboygan, WI

2/13/89 Trepanier (Priest Personnel Board) letter to Burns approving his request for an extension of his position as Associate Pastor at St. Peter Claver in Sheboygan. (11440)

9/16/91 Police report documenting high school boy's report that Burns sexually molested him at the St. Peter Claver rectory in early 1988. (27939-27940)

9/20/91 Police interview of Burns. Stated that he had been accused once before of same incident and did in fact fondle a boy when he was in his bed, but that the D.A. had not charged him. Admits to touching [redacted's] penis while in the bed. Burns is booked, processed, and transported to Sheboygan County jail. (10902-10903)

9/20/91 Criminal Complaint against Burns alleging two counts of feloniously having sexual contact with a person over the age of 12 years, but under the age of 16 years. (55267-55270)

9/20/91 Sklba letter to Burns placing him on administrative leave effective immediately. (11095)

¹ This timeline was principally prepared by Jeff Anderson & Associates PA; Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C. provided limited corrections to certain entries and assisted with redactions of abuse survivor information that could potentially have identified individual abuse survivors.

9/20/91 Archdiocesan statement for media regarding Burns' arrest, indicating the Archdiocese has been notified and is cooperating with authorities in the investigation. (11096)

9/20/91 – Administrative Leave

9/21/91 Sheboygan Police Department repeatedly contact boy (now 18) who reported being inappropriately touched by Burns while in grade school at St. Peter Claver for his statement. He previously reported the abuse and had a meeting involving his mother, Burns, and Fr. Dave Braun. Family agreed not to press charges if Burns received counseling and no one would be allowed to spend the night at the rectory with Burns. Sklba confirmed that counseling took place. (27986)

10/25/91 Tim Cary memo to Venne indicating that Burns would volunteer in the archives. Sklba wanted to be kept informed of Burns' status. (11083)

11/1/91 Second criminal complaint filed against Burns for incident in 1987. (55271-55275)

11/7/91 Parishioners' letter to Weakland addressing situation involving Burns and indicating that Sklba acknowledged knowing about the incidents. Parishioners ask the Archdiocese to acknowledge that a serious error in judgment took place. (11187-11188)

1/22/92 Burns pled no contest and was found guilty of second degree sexual assault. Sentenced on 4/24/92 to 9 months jail and 10 years probation. (10962) (amended signed 5/27/1992) (10940)

4/20/92 Cary memo to Venne that Burns is working in the Archives. (11079)

5/6/92 Venne letter to Captain Ronald Joosse from Sheboygan County Jail describing Burns' new duties during confinement and work release. Burns was assigned to archival assistance. Burns will not be assigned to any activity which would include contact with adolescents. (11078)

7/6/92 Weakland letter to parishioners indicating that when the first incident involving Burns at St. Peter Claver came to light the Church looked into it and in conjunction with the police force, the pastor, and the psychologist, they felt it would be safe to leave Burns there under guided supervision. (11186)

5/22/93 Burns letter to Weakland reviewing his understanding of the three options he was presented with: be removed from the priesthood; remain a priest without ever receiving another assignment; or leave the priesthood and start a new career. (11048-11049)

7/15/93 – Restrictions in Effect

7/15/93 Weakland letter to Burns placing upon him certain restrictions, indicating he cannot assign Burns to pastoral ministry in the future and that he is going to

undertake a formal process to decide whether or not he will be declared impeded from the exercise of orders in the future. (11043-11046; 27782-27785)

- 12/2/93 Weakland letter to Burns stating that the National Conference of Bishops was working on guidelines for handling allegations of sexual misconduct, but has not finished yet, so it is up to Weakland to decide what process to use to determine whether Burns can minister again. Wants to know Burns' preference of using a judicial or administrative process, but in the meantime continues restrictions already in place. (11037)
- 12/2/93 Weakland letter to Flynn outlining two allegations against Burns and indicating he needs to make a decision about Burns' ministry. (11038)
- 1/5/94 Burns letter to Weakland indicating his preference for a formal canonical trial and that Fr. Dan Ward is his procurator-advocate. (11039)
- 2/15/94 Piasecki chart entry on Burns – Notes that Burns is currently being retrained to leave the priesthood. Indicating concerns about Burns' overnight guests staying at Bethany House. Guest looks much younger than his age. Burns' attorney is advised of the problem and immediately reports back that the matter has been resolved. Discussing possibility of increased supervision over Burns. (28004)
- 3/30/94 Weakland letter to Fr. Ward informing him that Burns will not be assigned to a ministry position and that Fr. Ward should move to draft dispensation papers for Burns and contact Matt Flynn to work out the details. (11063)
- 4/12/94 Piasecki's letter to Weakland purporting to enclose Burns' Sex Offender Intensive Supervision Rules from the Department of Probation and Parole which Burns has initialed and signed. (28020)
- 4/14/94 Weakland letter to Kevin Ward (probation officer) indicating that Burns has permission to celebrate mass privately at Bethany House only. (27789)
- 5/6/94 Flynn letter to Hausmann (attorney) confirming that they have settled a case against the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and a check will be delivered for \$675,000. (27917-27918)
- 9/2/94 Weakland letter to Fr. Ward indicating that the Archdiocese does not publish facts of laicization as a regular course of action in the Catholic press. If Burns is not ready to voluntarily leave the priesthood, the Archdiocese is ready to begin the process of dismissal. (27791-27792)
- 2/25/95 Burns letter to Pope John Paul II submitting his formal request to be dispensed from all obligations attached to Sacred Orders and to return to lay status. (54807-54808)
- 3/18/95 Settlement agreement and mutual release between Archdiocese and Burns. Burns to seek voluntary laicization. Archdiocese will pay Burns \$25,000 upon notification of the laicization or uncontested finding that Burns is impeded from

- performing his duties as a Catholic priest, plus six months medical insurance, and a pension severance reimbursement. (11028-11032)
- 5/31/95 Vicar Log Entry. Indicates Burns placed in the “Not Assigned” category effective June 1, 1995. (11430)
- 7/11/95 Connell letter to Weakland asking for advice on how to prevent Burns’ cause from being filed by the Congregation for four years on a technicality, i.e., how to justify suspension of the “40 year old norm” that petitions for dispensation of Holy Orders are rarely considered for priests under the age of 40. (54916)
- 7/19/95 Weakland letter to Msgr. Klinger outlining Burns’ abuse of children, promising the full acts of the cause in the near future, and asking for him to meet with Fr. James Connell sometime between September 11 and September 15 to hear the case of Burns. (55240-55241)
- 7/30/95 Connell letter to Weakland outlining the two cases concerning Burns and indicating Burns’ petition to the Holy Father is the appropriate action at this time. (54813-54815)
- 8/25/95 Weakland letter to Ortas requesting voluntary laicization for Burns sent to the Vatican to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. States that he realizes that Burns is a few years lower than the minimum age for processing petitions for the dispensation of Holy Orders, but that “the granting of this dispensation would result in another measure of safeguard for minors.” Indicates \$1,000,000 spent in a personal injury settlement, including legal fees and related expenses. (54810-54812)
- 10/5/95 Congregation for discipline letter to Weakland stating that a decision on Burns’ petition was being postponed. This is normal for petitions from priests under the age of 40 and allows the priest to make a complete psychological and emotional assessment of the state of his mind and heart. Also provides explanation on process for requesting immediate consideration of a petition from a priest under age 40, including evidence that “serious scandal or possible harm could arise from his remaining in the clerical state and the ministry.” (55232-55233)
- 11/3/95 Weakland letter to Cardinal Ortas requesting reconsideration of the denial of the laicization request. States even greater scandal could occur. Burns guilty of abuse. Worries that there will be more scandal because people think the church equates sexual abuse with immaturity. The document indicates Weakland’s disagreement with the age policy. Weakland strongly urges reconsideration of Burns petition. (55098-55099)
- 12/15/95 Weakland letter to Cardinal Sodano stating that a very tragic and highly scandalous situation has developed involving a priest guilty of sexual abuse of a minor. States that he recently received word that because Burns is not yet 40 years old the petition was declared *dilata et compleantur acta*. Indicates greater scandal could occur because of the Congregation’s decision. The document

indicates Weakland's disagreement with the age policy. Weakland strongly urges reconsideration of Burns petition. (55095-55096)

- 1/15/96 Vatican Congregation letter stating that cases of those under 40 have been postponed. Signed by Antonio M. Card. Javierre, Prefect, and Carmelo Nicolon, undersecretary. (55230)
- 7/30/96 Pope John Paul II granted a dispensation from the clerical state to Burns. (55218-55219)
- 9/18/96 Apostolic Pro-Nuncio letter to Weakland enclosing correspondence and rescript by which Burns is dispensed from his priestly obligations. (55222)
- 9/25/96 Connell notes indicating he informed Burns of the rescript and discussed the money due to Burns as part of the dispensation contract. (55227-55229)
- 9/27/96 Flynn letter to Schneider enclosing \$25,000 check to Burns from Quarles and Brady Trust Account. (10973-10974)

9/25/96 – Administrative/Permanent leave: Laicized

- 10/2/96 Connell letter to Ortas informing him that Burns signed an Execution of the Rescript, accepting the dispensation from priestly obligations as well as the loss of the clerical state. (55220)
- 10/2/96 Payment Agreement and Receipt indicating Burns has been granted a dispensation from the priesthood and received a \$25,000 check representing payment in full of the obligations under his Settlement Agreement and Mutual Release with the Archdiocese. Signed by both Burns and Connell. (55223)
- 8/16/02 Kathy Walter correspondence to the Archdiocese informing them that Burns' probation had been revoked primarily for unsupervised and unapproved contact with minors between the years of 1997 and 2002, which was discovered in the spring of 2002, and that he was going back to prison. (10796)

[UNDATED] Selected pages of record transcribing sentencing Judge's comments. Describes the abuse, the blatant betrayal by Burns, the fact that he was given a second chance, and the fact that he was in therapy for the first incidence of abuse when he abused for the second time. Notes Burns is currently on administrative leave and enrolled in psychotherapy. Finds that "given appropriate supervision and control, Peter A. Burns is not likely to commit further crimes, and the welfare of the community will not suffer. (55165-55174)

[UNDATED] Probation/Parole Rules for Peter A. Burns – undated and unsigned. (28020; 27969-27970)

[UNDATED] Weakland letter to Cardinal Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments submitting for his consideration the case of Burns. (55003-55004)

[UNDATED] Archdiocese-prepared timeline of Burns incidents and three reasons to consider Burns' petition, his age notwithstanding, including safeguarding against future sexual abuse. (55235-55236)