

CASE STUDY

DONALD MATTHEW OSGOOD

(1927 -)

Dioceses:

Manchester, New Hampshire and Santa Fe, New Mexico



Current Status: *Unknown*

Location: *Unknown*

Donald Osgood, with a pleasant disposition and skills in music and cooking, was a member of homosexual networks at St. Anselm's College and Abbey in New Hampshire and among the diocesan priests of New England. He also preyed on teenage boys, but was sheltered from prosecution by the police. His bishops made every effort to salvage Osgood, and even reassigned him to a parish (where he abused), based on report by a chiropractor that Osgood was cured. No interest was shown in helping his victims.

Leon J. Podles

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The Rev. Donald Osgood: An Affable Molester

Donald Matthew Osgood, born July 18, 1927, was the son of a Catholic mother and a non-Catholic father. He therefore needed a canonical indult to receive Holy Orders. Ecclesiastical bureaucrats dotted their i's and crossed their t's in this matter,¹ but they showed less concern for his moral life and the effects it had on the laity.

Osgood was in the U.S. Navy until 1947, and then for two years studied at St. Anselm's College, which was run by the Benedictines. Osgood entered the Benedictines in 1949 and made his novitiate at St. Vincent's Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania, before returning to St. Anselm's. His attempt to become a Benedictine did not work out; Osgood then decided to apply for the diocesan clergy in Manchester, New Hampshire. An official at the Abbey reported to Bishop Matthew Brady of Manchester that Osgood "manifested both the good and bad qualities that were observed in the novitiate." The bad qualities were that he "did not like to study" and enjoyed the "social life" at the abbey "to the detriment of his studies." But he spent "much time in training his musical ability and these efforts have shown much fruit." He was willing to work "and labored well and industriously as all sorts of jobs." All in all, Osgood was "industrious, energetic and not too pious" and "kindness itself."²

Osgood was sent to St. Paul's Seminary in Ottawa. His file there indicated he was "polite, deferent . . . well-bred, well-mannered, very nice disposition." He was "cheerful, amiable, affable, sociable, and always ready to help and render service. He has given generously of his time for the music in the chapel" and was "an excellent organist." His grades were acceptable. The rector thought that Osgood had a "solid and sincere piety" and most important was "always docile, obedient and submissive."³

Bishop Brady ordained Osgood in June 1955 and made him music director of the cathedral. Osgood was then made chaplain of Sacred Heart Hospital and of St. Patrick's Home, an orphanage. Immediately, he attracted the attention of police. In February 1956, police reported to the diocese that Osgood was involved "with a boy from our school (mutual masturbation)" and involved "with boy from public school (same thing)." Osgood "has charge of the choir boys."⁴

¹ New Hampshire Attorney General Office (henceforth NHAG), p. 4120. Letter from Rev. Thomas S. Hansberry, Chancellor to Rev. T. J. Whelan, March 18, 1954. Page numbers correspond to the page numbers of the documents from the Diocese of Manchester released to the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office. These documents are available at <http://www.bishop-accountability.org/NH-Manchester/archives/archives.html?>

² NHAG, p. 4090. Letter from Bertrand C. Dolan to Bishop Matthew F. Brady, July 4, 1952. The letter refers to "reports given to us by the Master of Novices" as enclosed, but these reports are not among the files released by the Diocese of Manchester.

³ NHAG, pp. 4112-13. Semestrial Report on the Conduct and Dispositions of the Students, signed by J. C. Laframboise, June 19, 1953.

⁴ NHAG, pp. 3881-82. Unsigned Report, dated February 25, 1956. One former choir boy wrote: "I was a member of the St. Joseph Cathedral Boy's Choir from 1959 until 1961. Fr. Osgood was well liked by all of us, though it wasn't until years later that we could understand what had been going on. He would make the rounds of the third grade at my grammar school to scout out prospective recruits to his choir and God knows what else. I joined in the 5th grade, naive and unsuspecting of anything nefarious. Osgood had his

In February 1956, a boy [age redacted] reported to the diocese that Osgood, who was living at St. Patrick's Orphanage, kept asking him to go to St. Anselm's. The boy eventually agreed. In the car, Osgood let the boy steer. He unzipped the boy's fly and began playing with his genitals, putting the boy's hand on his (Osgood's) penis, all the while the boy was driving. The boy could not believe all this had really happened with a priest, but Osgood did the same thing the next time he and the boy were alone in the car. The boy told his parents, but, the report noted, "parents and the boy stated that they would keep this in deep secrecy."⁵

Shortly after receiving this report, Brady called Osgood on the carpet. Osgood was tongue-tied, but later wrote:

First, the strong intimations made about my past life in the seminary disturb me greatly – for the simple reason that this has NOT been the pattern of my past life. I feel it a duty in conscience you may believe. I am not afraid to state that the future will bear witness to the truth of this statement.

The file does not contain anything about Osgood's behavior in the seminary, but Brady must have heard something about it. Osgood also protested that he had not planned the incidents: "The impression was given to me, in our talk, that I planned this episode with premeditated malice and forethought. This is NOT true. I never asked either of them to see me or ride with me."

Brady ordered Osgood not to drive and to get rid of the car (a convertible). Osgood brought up the difficulty that the car was an ordination gift from his mother's friends, and that his mother had hypertension. Selling the car would upset her, "to say nothing of my inability to get over to see her." Osgood admitted that, "I have no one to blame for the consequences but myself." He then turned on the piety: "You are the only one to whom I can turn, excepting God and His Blessed Mother" and "I am deeply grateful to you for your paternal understanding and hasten to assure you that I have taken to heart your advice and admonitions."⁶ As Oscar Wilde said, "One would have to have a heart of stone not to laugh."

Osgood, even after he was ordained a priest for the diocese of Manchester and served as a chaplain at Sacred Heart Hospital, kept up his contacts at St. Anselm's College and the Abbey there. In 1958, the diocese of Manchester received a report about Osgood from "official outside sources." A Father John Burke of Springfield, Massachusetts, talked to a sophomore from St. Anselm's College, and then consulted with Msgr. T. O'Connell, a

favorites, and fortunately for me, I was not among them. He disappeared abruptly in the Spring of 1961. When my friends and I asked the other priests about his whereabouts, we were told, 'Oh.....uh, well, Father Osgood is now in New Mexico.' Had the information contained in your story been publicized in 1961, I'm certain there would have been a revolution as well as a lynching." (Personal communication to author.)

⁵ NHAG, pp. 3881-3882. Unsigned Report, dated February 25, 1956.

⁶ NHAG, p. 3884. Letter from Donald M. Osgood to Bishop Matthew F. Brady, February 29, 1956.

diocesan official of the diocese of Springfield, who on September 3, 1958 reported to the diocese of Manchester that:

1. The Sacred Heart Hospital chaplain's quarters have been and as far as still known are used for licentious purposes. Sodomitical acts have been performed there by our lay (teenager) informant with certain priests.
2. Pornographic materials relating to homosexuality have been and perhaps still are on the premises at this chaplain's quarters. Mechanical (apparently electronic) devices used for the purpose of stimulation have been a part of these operations.
3. Intoxicating beverages have been and perhaps still are served to the young college boys who have frequented this place. The pornographic materials were there publicly shown. The informant states that the priest concerned boasted of his relations to others who were discussed.
4. As to his personal experience, our informant places the date as of the close of the first college semester, around Christmas time of last year. He states that relations include everything from mutual masturbation to oral relations
5. The informant evidently wishes to protect the Benedictine priest with whom he has been involved at the college. He states that this priest has stated that he has been trying to reform. He also informs us that this Benedictine priest is known to the Boston ring who considers him "one of our kind." The Benedictine priest is alleged to be Father Casimir Mulloy.⁷
6. A Springfield priest has also been involved. Our informant claims to have experienced mutual masturbation with him. This priest is a close friend and visitor to the Sacred Heart chaplain. He is alleged to be Father Roy Genest.⁸
7. The present Sacred Heart chaplain and Father Genest were formerly associated with the Benedictines at the College as clerics.
8. Our informant is highly afraid of scandal. Especially as should concern his parents. He himself is one of the leaders of the student body at the College. Some of this information involved the seal [of confession]. but the informant had given all the needed permission and is willing even to testify under oath with the only reservation that he will not become known to the others as the informant.

Monsignor O'Connell believes this to be a nest of homosexuals.⁹

⁷ Other than this mention, no public accusations have been made against Casimir Mulloy. According to the necrology of the Abbey, Father Casimir A. Mulloy died in 1969. There is a Father Casimir Mulloy, O. S. B. Scholarship at St. Anselm's College.

⁸ The "Roy Genest" of this report is in fact the Rev. Roy Jenness of the Springfield, Massachusetts, diocese. In 2003 four brothers filed suit claiming that they had been sexually abused by several priests, Francis. P. Lavelle, Edward M. Kennedy, Ronald E. Wamsher, J. Roy Jenness, and Thomas J. O'Connor. See Bill Zajac, "Four Brothers File Priest Abuse Suit," *Springfield Republican*, December 13, 2003.

⁹ NHAG, pp. 3886-3887. Memo as "told to Fr. A. W. Olkovikas, Assistant Chancellor," September 3, 1958.

Osgood was an active homosexual; he liked young males, age 14 and up. He was sexually involved with college students at St. Anselm's College and with Benedictines at the Abbey. There was a homosexual subculture at St. Anselm's, and it had links to "the Boston ring." The offhand way that church officials referred to the Boston ring implied that they were familiar with it.¹⁰

Osgood was subjected to what officials must have considered drastic and adequate discipline. He was:

- Forbidden to set foot on campus
- Warned several times by superiors
- Cautioned by the police.
- Told to get rid of his car and forbidden to drive a car.¹¹

This last really hurt, and Osgood protested.

Osgood, however, did not reform. His interest in teenagers created problems. In March 1960, Rev. Joseph Donahue of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Manchester wrote to Msgr. Thomas Hansberry at the chancellery that Sergeant King of the Manchester police had been contacted by a father whose son was missing from home. The father called King the next day to report that the boy had returned home and had "spent the night at the Sacred Heart Hospital" with Osgood. The father then "started a tirade about the reputation of Fr. Osgood," a tirade which must have been forceful, because King told the father "to forget any threats and that he would see the matter was taken care of." Donahue reported that "no formal charges have been filed" and only King and Inspector Curran knew about the complaint.¹² King took care of the complaint by referring it to the chancery.

The new bishop, Ernest Primeau, had had enough. He gave Osgood an "official canonical warning: that Osgood would be suspended '*a divinis*' [not allowed to administer the sacraments] unless an immediate, drastic and permanent reformation is made in your personal life."¹³ Primeau informed the Rev. Gerald Fitzgerald, head of the Servants of the Paraclete, that "I have a young person [Osgood] who has been involved with boys and we feel that the time has come, after repeated warnings, to send him away for a while."¹⁴

¹⁰ Other priests in Springfield, most of them officials of the diocese, have been accused of sexual abuse. Bishop Dupré of Springfield resigned and fled within hours after he learned that he would be publicly accused of abusing teenage boys. Msgr. Richard Sniezyk of Springfield explained that some priests thought it acceptable to have sex with young men: "It was that era of the '60s – most of it took place from the mid-'60s to the early-'80s – and the whole atmosphere out there was, it was OK, it was OK to do" ("Monsignor Says Church Didn't Recognize Damage of Abuse," *Providence Journal*, February 23, 2004).

¹¹ NHAG, pp. 2876-2877. Unsigned, undated summary of complaints about Osgood. There are no documents concerning the "drastic steps" except one reference to a car (NHAG, p. 3888. Letter of Bishop Matthew F. Brady to Rev. Donald M. Osgood, September 13, 1958).

¹² NHAG, p. 3890. Letter of Rev. Thomas M. Donahue to Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry, March 22, 1960.

¹³ NHAG, p. 3916. Letter from Bishop of Manchester to Rev. Donald M. Osgood, June 30, 1961. The letter is addressed to Osgood at the Saint Joseph Cathedral Rectory in Manchester, so Osgood was apparently sharing a residence with Bishop Primeau at the time.

¹⁴ NHAG, p. 3919. Letter from Bishop of Manchester to Very Rev. Gerald Fitzgerald, Servant General, July 10, 1961.

Fitzgerald agreed to take Osgood. Primeau ordered Osgood to seek treatment at Via Coeli,¹⁵ a center for priests with psychological problems. Osgood delayed and Primeau threatened suspension. When Osgood arrived at Via Coeli, he initially created a favorable impression on Father Fitzgerald, who thought him “sincere in his attempt to regain his spiritual and priestly balance.”¹⁶

But Fitzgerald soon became suspicious. He wrote a mysterious letter to Thomas Hansberry, Chancellor of Manchester. It began “our work calls for us to be as simple as the dove and as wary as the serpent.” Fitzgerald stated that Osgood was eager to return to the diocese. Fitzgerald said that it all depended on “a quite easily ascertained fact. If [redacted] of [redacted] in Manchester is a married man that recommendation is hereby given to His Excellency. If, on the other hand, (redacted) is not married, we do not make this recommendation.” As Fitzgerald concludes, “undoubtedly all this seems rather cloak and dagger to you, but when I see you or His Excellency I will be able to give the explanation viva voce.”¹⁷

There was something about Osgood’s relationship with Mr. X in Manchester that was innocent if X was married but not innocent if X was not married. Fitzgerald may have been naïve about married homosexuals.

Hansberry replied that X “is a young married man in the early twenties with two small children. He is presently seeking to adopt or take in a foster child, a boy age 12. His recommendations seem to be in order and he has been active in Scouting. I do not know what his connection is with Fr. O., but any young man friendly with him would be suspect. This may seem harsh, but it is true because of past experience.” Even worse, Hansberry reported, Osgood was writing a boy back in Manchester, and the parents were unhappy. The boy “has become very irritable and disobedient and his marks in school have dropped.” Hansberry reported there were “rumors” that other boys were getting mail from Osgood and that “some of the stories are a bit wild.” Consequently, Hansberry wrote Fitzgerald, “you can judge that the Bishop will not be interested in having Father O. return to New Hampshire in the near future.”¹⁸ But Osgood’s correspondent was married, and Fitzgerald’s suspicions were temporarily allayed.

Fitzgerald was away in Rome when Hansberry’s letter arrived, and someone replied that “we cannot interfere with the public mails.” The staff at Via Coeli did not like Osgood: “Since Father is not frank and honest in his talks with us, [we are] protesting his complete rehabilitation. There does not seem much that we can do to help him. His masquerade of child-like innocence is hard to stomach and harder to deal with.”¹⁹ Osgood got wind of

¹⁵ NHAG, p. 3917. Letter from Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry, Chancellor, to Very Rev. Gerald Fitzgerald, Servant General, July 14, 1961.

¹⁶ NHAG, p. 3924. Letter from Very Rev. Gerald Fitzgerald, Servant General to Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry, August 14, 1961.

¹⁷ NHAG, p. 3937-3938. Letter from Father Gerald Fitzgerald to Msgr. Thomas Hansberry, November 16, 1961.

¹⁸ NHAG, p. 3936. Letter from Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry to Father Gerald, November 27, 1961.

¹⁹ NHAG, p. 3939. Letter from [unsigned] to Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry, Chancellor, no date.

the worries his correspondence was causing and claimed, “I only sent a postcard and that with the written permission of the parents.”²⁰

The Paracletes sent Osgood to Dr. Thomas Evilhizer for psychiatric evaluation (we do not have medical records). Apparently, Evilhizer thought Osgood had reformed and could be returned to ministry. In April 1962, Fitzgerald wrote to Bishop Primeau that he could make a “favorable report” about Osgood, who had been “very much on the beam and is a generous contributor to the welfare of the community here.” Fitzgerald therefore thought “it within prudence to give him at least one opportunity to prove himself on active duty.”²¹ Osgood was good: he could briefly fool even Fitzgerald, who did not like or trust abusers.

Osgood did not much care for the strict regimen of seclusion, prayer, and penance at Via Coeli. By June 1962, Fitzgerald’s suspicions were again aroused: “We are not internally satisfied as to the complete change of heart necessary. There has been no off-side actions as far as we know, but he is definitely attracted to the laity.”²² Fitzgerald thought that Osgood could work out of the Paraclete house in Nevis, Minnesota, where the Paracletes could keep a close eye on him. Bishop Primeau was agreeable to this, but obviously did not want Osgood back: “If reports are good we will find him a benevolent Bishop.”²³ Osgood did not like this proposal: “One could not say that he is happy about the prospect. He expected, unreasonably, a far broader relaxation of his penance.”²⁴

In August 1962, Fitzgerald reported that Osgood has “even more fully committed himself to the cultivation of the laity.” Osgood offered to work in the kitchen so he would not have to attend prayers and often made himself scarce, or as Fitzgerald put it more elegantly, was “*in abscondito*.” Fitzgerald had no idea what Osgood was up to during these periods of absence. Fitzgerald did not feel he had enough hard evidence to take any disciplinary actions that Rome would back up: “It seems to me that the Roman mind would want something more positive than that before taking any drastic action.” Fitzgerald added, “Unless Your Excellency already has positive evidence that justifies positive action of that sort ...” This remark implies either that Fitzgerald was not told about police reports and the results of the investigation of the homosexual ring at St. Anselm’s or that such activities were not considered serious matters by Rome.

Fitzgerald mentioned his plan (which Primeau later aborted) to have “an island retreat house where we could keep these unusual cases with a minimum of publicity and scandal.” Fitzgerald added a Postscript: “Tonight I had the 7 p.m. Mass at our little parish church – on the way back to this monastery I had my Paraclete driver the way up the

²⁰ NHAG, p. 3940. Letter from Don [Donald Osgood] to Tom [Rev. Thomas Hansberry], December 28, 1961.

²¹ NHAG, p. 3947. Letter from Father Gerald, Servant General to Bishop Ernest J. Primeau, April 7, 1962.

²² NHAG, p. 3955. Letter from Father Gerald, Servant General to Bishop Ernest Primeau, June 12, 1962.

²³ NHAG, p. 3954. Memo from the desk of Bishop Primeau to Msgr. Hansberry, no date.

²⁴ NHAG, p. 3952. Letter from Owen Kirley, Secretary General, to Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry, no date.

canyon – sure enough there was our boy [Osgood] – perched knees up all above on a boulder about a half mile up the state highway!”²⁵

Osgood continued to get on the nerves of the staff at Via Coeli. In October 1962, Father Fitzgerald called Hansberry and said that Osgood “did not follow the life of the community and he had apparently volunteered to serve in the kitchen with the thought of using this activity as an excuse to avoid spiritual exercises. The authorities have come to the conclusion that he has no interior life and is making no progress from a spiritual standpoint.” Moreover, “father has been taken off the cooking work because of the above reason and also because it was found that he was using his position to obtain and take out food for his lay friends. He was recently intercepted on his way out to a big party with a supply of food including a roast.” Father Fitzgerald concluded that “he is a playboy – polite and genial, interested in being with the laity, rather than with the men of the house.”²⁶

Fitzgerald also knew that con artists could fool psychiatrists. Hansberry wrote: “I asked if a Psychiatrist would help him and he [Fitzgerald] replied that he [Osgood] had seen a doctor in the field a few times but that it was easy for a person of this type to disguise his true character and he felt psychiatric treatment would do him no good.” Osgood had no interior life; he had no sense of the reality of the Christian life. The regimen at Via Coeli was not that of a psychiatric institution. It was aimed at men who had a sense of the reality of God, of sin, of the possibility of eternal punishment, of the necessity for repentance and conversion. But Osgood, like many priest abusers, had no prayer life, and little or no sense of the reality of the spiritual world. Hansberry said he would report the bad news about Osgood to Bishop Primeau, who was in Rome for the Ecumenical Council.²⁷

But Thomas S. Evilhizer, the psychiatrist to whom Osgood was sent, gave Osgood a favorable report, and in March 1963 Osgood was sent to the Santa Fe archdiocese and was stationed at Our Lady of the Assumption parish in Albuquerque. Shortly thereafter, in June 1963, Bishop Byrne wrote to Osgood about “your failures”²⁸ that necessitated the termination of his assignment and immediate return to Via Coeli. The chancellor of Manchester wrote Osgood that there would be no further assignments.²⁹ Osgood found the regimen at Via Coeli too confining, so in June 1963 he packed up and without permission moved to Albuquerque, taking a job as a night manager at a restaurant.

In December 1963, Osgood wrote to Bishop Primeau of Manchester to explain why he left:

²⁵ NHAG, p. 3951. Letter from Father Gerald, Servant General, to Bishop Ernest J. Primeau, August 15, 1962.

²⁶ NHAG, p. 3956. Repot of Telephone conversation with Father Gerald, s. p., Superior of Via Coeli, Jemez Springs, N.M. on October 22, 1962. Thomas S Hansberry, Chancellor.

²⁷ NHAG, p. 3956. Thomas Hansberry, “Report of telephone conversation with Father Gerald...on October 22, 1962.”

²⁸ NHAG, p. 3893. Letter of Archbishop Edwin V. Byrne to Rev. Donald Osgood, June 3, 1963.

²⁹ NHAG, p. 3899. Letter of Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry to Rev. Donald M. Osgood, June 6, 1963.

I realize that I had a very severe problem that I seemed to be incapable of controlling, and being aware of this I wished professional treatment. The treatment offered at Via Coeli did not seem to be aimed at the root of the problem but only in increasing my will power. This I knew wouldn't get at the root of the problem as I had used all the will power at my command in the past with no avail.

With the intention of receiving psychological help in depth, I left Via Coeli and gained employment and a place to stay to actualize this intention. I am happy to report to Your Excellency that I received the professional psychological help I needed and that the problem that I had for so long is no more. I have had no difficulty or feeling of necessity for such activity for the past four and one-half months.³⁰

In a March 1964 letter, Osgood further explained that he could not accept either of the alternatives offered to him by the Manchester diocese: "1. Permanent protective custody at Via Coeli or 2. Laicization," because "it was difficult for me to see how either of these choices would solve or even alleviate my personal problem." He protested that Via Coeli had become "a dumping ground for unwanted priests" with "an atmosphere heart-rendingly conducive to shiftlessness or even despair." Osgood had a deep and sincere conviction that "my ordination was neither a mistake nor something I went into without deliberate consideration and free choice did not permit me to conscientiously seek laicization."³¹ Osgood was not going to admit there were any grounds for him to seek voluntary laicization.

In Albuquerque, Osgood found a doctor, Robert R. Gibson, D.C. Osgood explained that "Dr. Gibson has been treating me almost from the beginning of my settling in Albuquerque." Osgood "spent most of last summer and fall not only in frequent therapeutic sessions with Dr. Gibson, but also in hour upon hour of careful and methodic study of his observations in dealing with the emotionally disturbed." Osgood protests that "now more than ever, laicization seems to me to be a traitorous compromising of the promises foresworn by me, knowingly and willingly, immediately prior to my receiving major orders." Gibson diagnosed Osgood as not a "congenital" homosexual, one born that way, but as a "conditioned" homosexual." Gibson explained that:

This type comes into being in a normal person, usually early in life due to a psychic trauma. In this type the person does not have the expression of the sexual urge under the control of the will. It may be likened to an allergy. Whenever a situation arises that unconsciously reminds the mind of the traumatic situation, action takes place without the will of the person. During the times there is no reminder by association in the mind the person's actions are normal. However as soon as there arises a situation in which the association is triggered, the action takes place.

³⁰ NHAG, p. 3910. Letter from Donald Osgood to Bishop Ernest J. Primeau, December 14, 1963.

³¹ NHAG, p. 3911. Letter from Donald M. Osgood to Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry, March 26, 1964.

[Osgood] was a victim of this second type. During about 30 hours of psychotherapy, using the insight methods, he discovered the trigger situation. Since that time he has not and will not have any difficulty. Before that time he had no control of his actions. The former trigger situation can arise, he is conscious of it and has no effects.³²

Gibson pronounced Osgood cured. But, as the diocese of Manchester noted, the D. C. after Gibson's name meant that he was a chiropractor.

One has to wonder about the professional ethics and judgment of a chiropractor who would make a psychiatric diagnosis. Osgood's actions were not like an allergy, they were not involuntary. It was not true to say Osgood had "no control"; Osgood never had sex in public. If there is any truth in Gibson's diagnosis, it might mean that Osgood suffered a psychic trauma, that he was himself abused or raped when he was young. But one has to wonder about Gibson's motivation in writing the letter.

In May 1964, Bishop Primeau of Manchester informed Dr. Francis Braceland of the Institute of Living in Hartford, Connecticut, that Osgood "is a young man who, shortly after his ordination, became very seriously involved homosexually with a number of boys and older men. In spite of repeated warnings and efforts to obtain his reform, he finally became so notorious that it was necessary to refer him to a home for priests (Via Coeli) in New Mexico. There he seems to have pulled the wool over the eyes of the psychiatrist who worked with him and he was permitted another trial in a parish in that area. Again he got into serious trouble."

Primeau continued that Osgood had left Via Coeli and worked in Albuquerque. "A short while ago he informed us that he had been under the direction of a certain doctor who had been treating him and had completely cured him of his affliction. Upon our request, this doctor sent us a well-written explanation of his case with the statement that it had been solved. However, the initials after the doctor's name were D.C., which we presume indicates that he is a chiropractor." Primeau concluded, "We should like to do everything possible to save this young man."³³ There is no indication that Primeau (or anyone else in the Manchester diocese) ever showed any concern for Osgood's young victims.

In 1964, Osgood returned to New England and was evaluated at the Institute of Living. By September, Osgood returned to Albuquerque and continued to see Dr. Gibson, the chiropractor. In March 1965, Hansberry wrote to Dr. Austin McCawley at the Institute of Living that Osgood had been seen by a Dr. Evilhizer at Via Coeli, but that Hansberry felt that from Evilhizer's report, "the doctor was not aware of the problem or that he was very much deceived by Father Osgood in his talks with him."³⁴ Apparently, doctors were not informed of the events that led priests to be referred to them; the psychiatrists received their information only from the accused or admitted abuser.

³² NHAG p. 3904. Quoted in letter (signature page missing but clearly an official of the Diocese of Manchester) to S. George Brown, M.D., March 23, 1964.

³³ NHAG, p. 3994. Letter of Bishop of Manchester to Dr. Francis J. Braceland, May 1, 1964.

³⁴ NHAG, p. 3982. Letter of Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry to Austin McCawley, M.D., March 3, 1965.

Osgood worked as a restaurant manager at the Village Inn Pancake House, where one of the employees confessed to him (unaware that Osgood was a priest) that he had committed murder and wanted Osgood to help turn him in to the police. Osgood did so, but then was summoned as a witness and realized that the fact that he was a priest would come out.³⁵ The Diocese of Manchester wrote a letter to the Albuquerque police department and finessed the situation.

In September 1965, Osgood began seeing a psychiatrist, Dr. Warren Brown, who had been recommended by Dr. Braceland of the Institute of Living. In a few months, Brown was optimistic, according to Osgood, about Osgood's return to ministry.³⁶ Bishop Primeau was dubious. Osgood's reputation in New Hampshire was not good, and "he would be of more value in another diocese perhaps in the West," that is, as far from New Hampshire as possible. Osgood had written Primeau that he would like to work in "certain areas in which I could be of most value to the church." Primeau thought this meant music or the choir, and said that "my first reaction to this is that these are the areas which contributed to his delinquency." (I am not sure of the connection between music and delinquency, but this remark perhaps implies that Osgood had been after choir boys). Primeau wanted to recommend Osgood to another diocese, but informed Brown that such a recommendation "will depend in great measure on your appraisal of his ability to avoid scandalous lapses."³⁷

Brown, according to the diocese of Manchester, pronounced Osgood fit to work,³⁸ and so, despite all the bizarre circumstances and the bishop's statements that Osgood could fool psychiatrists, the bishop of Manchester took Osgood back and in January 1967 put him in All Saints parish in Lancaster, New Hampshire. In September 1967, a woman approached a Father Crosby at a conference and warned him that "there was much talk about Father Osgood and his effectiveness as a priest was being shattered." A layman called Crosby and said that rumors were circulating that Osgood was meeting with groups of boys twelve years of age and up, and there were liquor for the older teens and "um, pictures" at these meetings. There were also rumors of "physical actions."³⁹

Hansberry immediately called Osgood in for a talk. Osgood was "very sincere in his denial of any improper actions," but admitted that he had showed the boys Playboy-type magazines that teens were familiar with, and that he now realized it was imprudent to have done this. Hansberry wrote that, "I have no reason to doubt Father Osgood's veracity in this regard. He seems very sincere and determined to make a go of it."⁴⁰

³⁵ NHAH, p. 4010. Letter of Don [Osgood] to Msgr. Tom [Hansberry], June 10, 1965.

³⁶ NHAG, p. 4015. Letter of Donald Osgood to Bishop Ernest J. Primeau, January 19, 1966.

³⁷ NHAG, p. 4014. Letter of Bishop of Manchester to Warren Brown, M.D., February 4, 1966.

³⁸ NHAG, p. 3875. "In the letters of February 15 and June 14, 1966, to the Diocese of Manchester, Dr. Brown recommended that he [Osgood] could return to ministry with some sort of supervision." Letter of Msgr. Francis J. Christian, Chancellor, Diocese of Manchester to Rev. Ron Wolf, Chancellor, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, February 24, 1993.

³⁹ NHAG, pp. 3967-68. Memo of September 15, 1967.

⁴⁰ NHAG, p. 3966. Report of Interview with Rev. Donald M. Osgood, September 17, 1967, signed Thomas S. Hansberry.

Hansberry had a positive will to believe Osgood, possibly because Hansberry realized that he was stuck with Osgood. He could not palm Osgood off on another diocese, and Rome would not remove Osgood from the priesthood.

Hansberry continued his investigations of the rumors about Osgood. One family had been befriended by Osgood, but broke off the relationship after Osgood “showed their fourteen-year-old boy a book with pictures of nude men” and had done the same with other boys. The family felt no hostility to Osgood; they regretted that his ability to work with young people was ruined: “They like him and had hoped for great things from him. They do not want to hurt him in any way.”⁴¹

Osgood, sensing doom, decided to try for a transfer to Washington, D. C. Bishop Primeau wrote a semi-complete account of Osgood’s career in a letter to Cardinal Boyle, then archbishop of Washington:

Several years ago, Father Osgood was involved in a number of homosexual incidents which occasioned his suspension. I arranged for an examination for him at the Institute of Living in Hartford, Conn., and, upon the advice of the experts there, gave him permission to work as a layman in Albuquerque, New Mexico while under the direction of a recommended psychiatrist in that city. Three years later this doctor advised me that Father Osgood had completed his treatment and he recommended him for active duty in the priesthood.⁴²

But Bishop Primeau neglected to mention that the homosexual incidents involved boys in their mid-teens, that the police were involved, that there was a homosexual ring, and that Osgood was sent to Via Coeli.

The Chief of Police of Lancaster, Larry Connarry, called the Manchester Chancery, according to notes, and warned that “a police investigation is in order.” Connarry was retiring within a few days and feared “that if a non-Catholic comes in the whole thing might blow sky high.”⁴³ In January 1968, another informant reported similar rumors about Osgood and said the father of one of the boys whom Osgood approached is “an anti-Catholic Protestant who threatens to tear Father Osgood limb from limb.” But Catholics who complained about Osgood’s sexual behavior nonetheless did not want to hurt him because he was “very understanding, always available, very helpful.” With all his problems, Osgood was better than their pastor, who “never answers sick calls, never visits the hospital, does not care for the seriously ill, is not interested in CCD, is wrapped up in renovating the church, has an inferiority complex which causes him to rant and rave at the people in the church for no reason, and the spiritual life of the parish is very low.”⁴⁴ In some ways, an affable molester was better than a neurotic grump.

⁴¹ NHAG, p. 3965. Confidential Report, October 9, 1965 signed T. S. H. [Thomas S. Hansberry].

⁴² NHAG, p. 3963. Letter of Bishop of Manchester to Cardinal Patrick O’Boyle, Archbishop of Washington, February 27, 1968.

⁴³ NHAG, p. 3970. Undated memo with the initials R. E. M.

⁴⁴ NHAG, p. 3971. Memo, “Confidential to the Bishop,” January 26, 1968, apparently by Thomas Hansberry. The second page of the memo is missing.

Hansberry told Osgood to get out of town immediately. Osgood claimed it was all gossip, but started looking for another diocese, such as Santa Fe, in which to work. He also was considering laicization, but did not know how to start another career at age forty. Osgood finally started seeking laicization, but asked the diocese of Manchester to finance his studies toward a teaching certificate so that he could support himself.⁴⁵ The diocese offered to help with the laicization, but did not offer any tuition aid.⁴⁶ In May 1968, Osgood again mentioned laicization, but nothing came of this. Osgood's last known address was in 1970, in El Monte, California. After that the diocese had no further word of him. The first lawsuits were filed in 1994.

The portrait of Osgood in his file would be worthy of a novel by John Kennedy Toole, author of *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Osgood is a caricature of a likeable, gay con artist, who enjoyed playing the organ, parties, and the bodies of young males, especially choir boys. Almost everyone liked Osgood, even those who were aware of his faults and crimes. Bishops affectionately called him a “young man,” even when he was in his late thirties. A murderer turned for help to Osgood, whom he knew only as a restaurant manager, probably because he had experienced Osgood as “kindness itself.” The victims, however, did not experience this side of Osgood. One victim recently wrote:

I was a victim of Father Osgood. I was thirteen at the time and I went to St. Joseph's grammar school. I was in the eighth grade and the ideal type for this kind of predator. My father was an alcoholic and there were six children in my family. My mother worked most of the time as a waitress. My teacher at the time was Sister Francena. Father Osgood often came to class to “get my help.” I remember very little about what actually happened, but I remember being downstairs in the school in some kind of storeroom. I remember resisting Father Osgood. I also remember he always had liquor in the trunk of his car. I remember going to confession to Father Osgood nearly every week. We each knew who was on the other side of the curtain. I have visions of other things but my recollection is very foggy about most incidents.

I went to the convent where Sister Francena was retired. I believe it was in Derry, New Hampshire. I was very surprised that she was that old since it had only been about eight years since I was in her class. She was my favorite. The first thing she said to me was although she could not remember my name, she has prayed for me since I left the school. She found out about Father Osgood and carried significant guilt for sending me with him all those times. I went to twelve different schools before I got out of high school. My father was a car salesman and we moved a lot. I am now a “fairly normal” adult. Married for the third time. Three children, two boys twenty-five and twenty-two, and one girl (deceased from a drug overdose age thirty-three). Very difficult part of my life! I was an alcoholic. Quit drinking twenty-five years ago. (Another story) I would be interested in learning more

⁴⁵ NHAG, p. 3962. Letter of Donald Osgood to Msgr. Tom [Thomas S. Hansberry, Chancellor], April 11, 1968. Osgood indicated that he was living in Albuquerque at this time.

⁴⁶ NHAG, p. 3961. Letter of Msgr. Thomas S. Hansberry to Don [Donald Osgood], May 7, 1968.

about Father Osgood and what happened to me. It's interesting in your column you mention a chiropractor and his reference to "psychic trauma." I saw a psychiatrist that espoused the same theory about me. I often wonder if Father Osgood was involved in my "psychic trauma." The following year I went to St. Thomas Aquinas HS in Dover. There I encountered Father [redacted]. He was primarily after my cousin Richard. I remember the liquor in the trunk with him as well and I remember him exposing himself to both of us on several occasions. My cousin told my aunt and she called the Bishop. Father [redacted] was transferred to a parish in northern New Hampshire.⁴⁷

The poison in the Church continues year after year, decade after decade, generation after generation: Alcoholism, divorce, drug use, death. Perhaps Osgood had himself been abused as a young teenager (as the chiropractor intimated), and reenacted the abuse again and again and again.

Church authorities did not approve of Osgood's behavior, but they lumped all his activity under the name "homosexuality" because all his sexual activity appears to have been with males over the age of puberty. Church authorities regarded sex with young teens as being on the same level as sex with adult males. They did not see the harm that was being done to the boys when Osgood lured them into sexual relations.

They did not see the harm because Church authorities saw morality in terms of acts: oral sex or anal sex was "sodomitical." The act was wrong and the primary evil was that Osgood had committed a sin and needed to repent. This was true, but the authorities were blind to the harm that Osgood was causing by his acts. Underlying this failure is a voluntaristic, nominalistic moral theology, which I discuss at length in Chapter Sixteen of my book, *Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church*. Briefly, the authorities regarded acts as wrong because God had forbidden them and did not consider that God had forbidden them because these acts harmed the creation. One can regard all homosexual acts as wrong and still see that there is a vast difference between the harm done to a willing, consenting adult partner and to a confused thirteen-year-old boy.

Church authorities were oblivious to the hell into which Osgood plunged his victims. They did not realize that for a teenager to be homosexually initiated by a priest is psychologically a very damaging experience. A boy feels that his whole world of values is shattered, that the foundations of his faith are destroyed, and that the whole adult world is a lie. No one showed any concern for Osgood's young sexual partners. Church officials in Manchester knew that some of them were young teenagers, but did not reflect on how Osgood's sexual approaches affected both the faith and psychological balance of the victims. As one of Rev. J. Roy Jenness's (the Genest of the report) victims said, "As horrific as the sex itself was, what was more horrific to all of us is that we trusted these men. In our eyes and in our parent's eyes, these men – priests – were here to serve God."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Personal communication to author. The priest at the end of the communication has not been publicly accused.

⁴⁸ Bill Zajac, "Four Brothers File Priest Abuse Suit," *Springfield Republican*, December 13, 2003.

Church authorities went to great pains to assure that the minutiae of canon law were observed – they were like those who tithed mint and dill and cumin and neglected the weightier matters of the law: truth, justice, and mercy.

Fitzgerald and the bishops of Manchester would have liked to see Osgood out of the priesthood, but they all knew that Rome would make involuntary laicization as difficult as possible. Osgood too knew this, and was careful to put into writing protestations that he knew fully well what he was doing when he took his ordination vows, so no one could claim that he did not act in full knowledge of what was required of him. Why did the Vatican make it so difficult to remove abusive priests? That is still a mystery. Did Italians think that Americans were naïve in objecting to priests having sex with teenage boys? Or was the Vatican permeated by a clericalist attitude that thought keeping a man in the priesthood was the most important thing in the world, that being “degraded” to the lay state was too much of a punishment even for acts of child abuse?

Because bishops knew that the Vatican would not remove abusers, American bishops had to make the best of the situation by keeping public scandal down, persuading police not to charge abusive priests, transferring priests so that their reputation could start afresh, palming them off on other bishops, and parking them in treatment facilities. No one except Fitzgerald had the courage to tell the Vatican (and that includes the popes) that the policy was wrong and was ruining the lives of tens of thousands of young Catholics. The Vatican set the rules; bishops, like everyone else, had to follow them. Obeying the law of the Church and the will of Church authorities was the way to please God; unfortunately, help for suffering children was not demanded by canon law.