

WRONGFUL DEATHS

# VAUGHN BISHOP

DIED JANUARY 25, 1976

ABUSER: REV. EDWARD FRANCIS DONELAN

(1924 - 1994)



Diocese: *Santa Fe, New Mexico*  
Status: *Deceased*



Leon J. Podles

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Edward Donelan of Massachusetts left his position as chaplain at the New Mexico State Boys School under suspicious circumstances, and set up a ranch, La Hacienda de los Muchachos, where he could isolate boys and abuse them. Not everyone was fooled by his claims to be the boys' friend, however, and some complained to Archbishop Robert Sanchez of Santa Fe of Donelan's activities in the "skin room." Sanchez refused to act until a boy ran away from Donelan's attentions in mid-winter and froze to death in the New Mexico mountains. Even then, Donelan was only transferred. The state of New Mexico, and possibly its governor and one of its U. S. senators also knew of the abuse and failed to act against Donelan.

From childhood on Edward Francis Donelan had, he claimed, a deep interest in the American Indian.<sup>1</sup> He grew up in St. Bernard's parish in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, attended Worcester Trade School, and joined the Marines in 1942. He served as a combat engineer in Europe during World War II.<sup>2</sup> After the war he attended St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield, Connecticut, from which he applied to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, citing his interest in Indians. He went to St. Thomas Seminary in Denver and was ordained in 1956. Edwin Byrne, the archbishop of Santa Fe, soon appointed Donelan to Cristo Rey parish in Santa Fe.

The Irish clergy have long had their difficulties with alcohol. In 1957 Donelan took the pledge: "I, Father Edward Donelan, in reparation for the sins of Drunkenness on the part of my brother Priests, in order to obtain the Grace of Temperance for them, in penance for my own sins, for the good of my immortal soul and to obtain the conversion of sinners, generally, do hereby offer to God the penance of abstaining from all alcoholic beverages for a period of FIVE YEARS."<sup>3</sup> Donelan does not make clear whether his own sins included a love affair with the bottle, but his taking the pledge points in that direction. His deterioration at the end of his life also was possibly a sign of alcoholism, but there is no mention of excessive drinking in his file.

### *The New Mexico Boys School*

Boys can be difficult (I was one myself and I have raised four boys and been a Scout leader). The most difficult among them in New Mexico were put in the New Mexico Boys' School in Springer, about 125 miles northeast of Santa Fe on Interstate 25. In 1958, at Donelan's request, Archbishop Byrne appointed him chaplain at that school.<sup>4</sup>

Donelan soon had the idea that he would like to start a boys' home on his own. Archbishop Byrne pointed out that there was already a Boys' Ranch near Belen. But Donelan claimed it had shortcomings. The Southern Baptists had bailed this ranch out of a financial crisis, and therefore, Donelan explained, "the attitude of the staff that I spoke to was either indifferent to and/or anti-Catholic." The boys told Donelan that "a Catholic is encouraged to go to non-Catholic services, and his own religion is downgraded."<sup>5</sup> Donelan appealed to the desire of Catholics to have a "Catholic" environment for boys. Donelan may have already had his own ideas of what that environment should include.

Donelan never fully explained why he was dissatisfied with the New Mexico Boys' School. One reason might have been the handling of his mail. The Superintendent of the School had a policy that "All mail with New Mexico Boys' School or Box 38 or both on the envelope will most likely be opened by this office."<sup>6</sup> Donelan objected to this, not unreasonably for a priest, but the content of his correspondence may have aroused suspicion.<sup>7</sup> New Mexico Secretary of Corrections Howard Leach learned that boys were being physically abused at the Springer school, and in 1970 fired the superintendent and several employees.<sup>8</sup>

Donelan had some type of problem at the school. In March 1971, the new archbishop, James Davis, responded in a letter to a visit from Leach. Davis said that Donelan's file contained "no evidence of homosexual behavior, nor even of homosexual tendency." Donelan was the opposite: "very manly – open and forthright." Many people commented on Donelan's imposing physical appearance: "A towering (6-feet, 5-inches) Catholic priest with a black, roll-brim cowboy hat"<sup>9</sup>; "This giant man in dusty engineer's boots"<sup>10</sup> and "a burly, six-foot-five inch priest in dusty pants, boots, and a cowboy hat."<sup>11</sup> Such is the power of stereotypes which can either unjustly stigmatize the innocent or, as in this case, protect the guilty. No one could imagine that such a big, masculine ex-Marine would be interested in having sex with boys.

Leach must have heard something about Donelan, because in the letter Davis maintained "nor did any complaint of this serious nature [i.e., homosexuality] come to my attention prior to your visit."<sup>12</sup> This, of course, implies that during the visit, Leach reported a complaint that Donelan had engaged in homosexual behavior at the New Mexico Boys' School. Leach apparently decided to convey the complaint orally rather than in writing – it was sensitive material, and he wanted no paper trail. Davis couldn't remember any details of another problem of which he was aware, but he did remember that Donelan had a dispute with the staff at the Boys' School, and Davis suspected that "some 'political' chicanery is at bottom of this matter." Davis thought that "father's [i.e., Donelan's] reputation should be cleared,"<sup>13</sup> again implying there was a serious blot on it. In 1999, two men who had been abused as boys at the Hacienda sued Leach and another New Mexico official, Felix Rodriguez, for not reporting Donelan's suspected abuse at the New Mexico Boys' School, a failure that allowed boys at the Hacienda to be abused. The case revealed that "sometime in 1970, apparently after Donelan had left the Boys' School, Leach and Rodriguez received allegations that Donelan had sexually abused residents of the school. They reported the complaints to the Archbishop, not to any law enforcement agencies."<sup>14</sup> Church and state joined in failure to protect children.

### *La Hacienda de los Muchachos*

In 1966, while still serving as chaplain at the New Mexico Boys' School, Donelan began setting up the Hacienda de los Muchachos in Farley, New Mexico, about thirty miles east of Springer. He found an abandoned school building and began to remodel it. He signed his letters to donors "the Juvenile's beggar, Father Ed."<sup>15</sup> In June 1969, Juvenile Court Judge Edwin L. Swope gave Donelan a plaque "in sincere and grateful appreciation of

the exceptionally dedicated effort, invaluable service, and unstinted dedication to the youth of this community.”<sup>16</sup>

In December 1969, Donelan left the New Mexico Boys’ School to devote all of his time to the Hacienda de los Muchachos.<sup>17</sup> That same year, Pierre Nichols joined the staff as a volunteer, teaching art and nature. At first he liked Father Ed, but then he began noticing that Donelan “was really overly dominating both as a boys’ ranch director and as a priest.”<sup>18</sup> Donelan could not relate to Nichols as an adult and spent all of his time with the boys. This made Nichols a little lonely, but he accepted Donelan’s exclusive interest in the boys: “One does not question a priest on his morals ... so I thought. Surely he is able to maintain a very high level of ethics with the boys ... so I thought.”<sup>19</sup> Nichols slowly came to realize that not all priests could be trusted.

### *Control through Alienation*

Donelan isolated the boys from their pasts and their families. In 1973, he proposed guidelines that would severely limit gifts from boys’ families: he was upset that parents were not contributing to the Hacienda but would send the boys gifts; also, “we do not allow home visits.”<sup>20</sup> Donelan convinced the boys that their parents were “thoughtless, even mean ... no good to the boys.”<sup>21</sup> “Where the boys’ past was shattered and the future looked dismal, Father Ed took over.”<sup>22</sup> A state agency later reported: “Father Ed’s policy of the boys ‘joining the Hacienda family’ and almost completely severing all familial relationships, is diametrically opposed to agency policy and is detrimental to the boys placed there. Father Ed feels that if parents cannot provide financial support, the parents have no right to the child.”<sup>23</sup> Donelan also could be extraordinarily mean: “Sometimes the boys appear to be punished for their parents’ lack of support. Father Ed returned many Christmas presents from the boys’ families during the 1975 Christmas season with notes explaining that if they (parents, relatives) could not support the boys, they could not afford gifts.”<sup>24</sup>

Donelan made sure he was regarded as Father in every sense: when he talked of the boys as his sons, he was not using it in a Christian sense, but rather the term had “a serious and intentional physical meaning.”<sup>25</sup> Benefactors were delighted that there was such a family atmosphere at the Hacienda. One wrote that when he visited the Hacienda “the relationship between Father Ed and the Boys was something else. It was more than a family gathering than a home for boys. No institution look or feel there. They called him Father and he called them son.”<sup>26</sup> Another woman wrote that a boy who arrived at the Hacienda “has also found a new father who loves him and shows it.” Donelan put his arm around a boy and told him, “Thanks for being my son.”<sup>27</sup> Donelan either consciously or unconsciously knew that the dynamics of incest would protect him from exposure. Incest victims are the sexual abuse victims most reluctant to reveal their plight.

Donelan needed the staff at the Hacienda, but he tried to disrupt their relationships with the boys. Nichols tried to work closely with the boys to help them, but Donelan did not like this. Donelan made the boys feel his “possessiveness and jealousy” when he “pulled them off of staff who were trying to help a boy grow.”<sup>28</sup> Donelan made life difficult for

the staff by criticizing them in front of the boys. "While it was not too serious at the start, it showed just the same to the boys, that he, Father Ed, could also control the staff just as he did them. Soon the boys had no one it was safe to go to, so the only one was...Father Ed. Possessiveness brought control."<sup>29</sup> The boys thought that if Donelan could boss adults around unfairly, what chance did a mere boy have.

Donelan also demonstrated that he could maltreat the staff. In the winter of 1974, Pierre Nichols later wrote, Brother Earl Johnson "repeated stories of how and what boys were doing in Father Ed's room at night!" Nichols was dubious because "Earl was not very straight either" and "had been involved in sexual acts before too, and threatened to expose Father Ed if he himself were ever put on the spot." This celibate culture had its secrets, and no one wanted to open the closet. Nichols discussed this to Donelan, hoping to "sober him up." Instead, Donelan fired Earl the same day, showing the boys that "Father Ed ruled supreme and that no one messed with him."<sup>30</sup> Donelan cut off Nichol's stipend, and Nichols left in October, 1975.

The boys' health and safety were at the mercy of Donelan. Donelan even controlled the boys' medical care: "Father Ed takes away all medication a boy is taking when he arrives at the ranch. Generally, the medication is given only when a boy asks for it, placing the responsibility on the child. The medications withheld include those prescribed for kidney problems, foot fungus and epilepsy."<sup>31</sup> The boys had to ask Donelan for their medicine.

Donelan created a chaotic situation in which he was the only person the boys could look to for help. The corporation had never executed bylaws,<sup>32</sup> and the board was inactive.<sup>33</sup> The physical environment was makeshift and disorderly, as was the social environment. "The whole system of discipline is arbitrary and some boys are punished for the same infraction for which other boys are not punished," the state reported. Therefore, "since discipline is inconsistent, and pleasurable things are taken away for punishment, the boys experience little or no security. The boys seem to have little to depend on or look forward to."<sup>34</sup> The boys knew that Donelan had complete and arbitrary control of them and even of the adult staff. If the boys wanted to be on Donelan's good side, the report omits, they could always participate in the activities of the skin room.

### *The Skin Room*

During his first stint at the Hacienda, Pierre Nichols lived in a room accessible only through Donelan's locked quarters. Nichols left, but in late summer 1973, Nichols needed work and returned to the Hacienda, living in the new apartments that had just been built. Donelan took over Nichols' old room and furnished it with "fur rugs and a TV." It became the "skin room,"<sup>35</sup> with an obvious double entendre. It had the only TV the boys could watch. Only boys who were in Father Ed's favor were allowed in this skinroom; the others were excluded. Offerings, the boys said, included beer and liquor. Something else was going on in that room. "Boys whispered about things."<sup>36</sup>

In spring 1974, Nichols received an urgent, long distance call for Donelan. Normally staff were forbidden to interrupt Donelan.

I knew he was in his room (with boys) yet thought he'd want to answer the call, so I went and knocked on the door. I could here music or TV (?) inside. Realizing that he could probably not hear the knocking, also considering that it was a long distance call, I opened the door and stepped in to tell Father Ed of the call. He immediately was mad at me for doing what I did. When I stepped into the room, I looked ahead into the skinroom and saw Father Ed naked on the fur rugs laying on his side, embracing one of the boys.

Donelan was "embarrassed." After this incident, activity in the skin room began after 9 p.m., when the staff went off duty, and they "had no right to (or way to) to see what was going on at Father Ed's rear room."

Pierre Nichols later had a conversation with a fifteen-year-old boy who was leaving the Hacienda.

Pierre: "Do you think Father's playing around ...I mean really jacking -off boys, or what?"

Boy: "I know he does!"

Pierre asked what the conditions were for a boy to enter the skinroom.

Boy: "Father says he can go in only with his undershorts on, or without them on."

Pierre asked how Donelan was dressed.

Boy: "he doesn't have any clothes on either."<sup>37</sup>

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 Pierre: "I heard in Dec. of 1974, that one boy said that Father Ed made him get a hard-on and then as he (Father) went to suck his dick, he said, "Now I'm going to show you how much I love you!"<sup>38</sup>

Pierre asked what the boys said of Donelan.

Boy: "They'd called him a queer."<sup>39</sup>

### *The Boy Who Froze to Death*

On January 25, 1976, Vaughn Bishop, twelve years old, and another boy, Philip Romero, fourteen years old, fled the ranch,<sup>40</sup> and made it fifty miles to Springer before Vaughn froze to death.<sup>41</sup> The Rev. Irving Klister, who left El Paso, Texas, because of his involvement in a pedophile ring that staged brutal orgies,<sup>42</sup> was then pastor of St. Joseph's Church in Springer, so he said the funeral mass for Vaughn.<sup>43</sup> Nichols' faith was tried, but he knew that "God does nothing wrong" and that "Vaughn's death will somehow serve a good purpose," and the death might be "the key that opens the door at the end of the dark tunnel of wrong doings at the Boys' ranch."<sup>44</sup>

It is harder to hide a body than to hide sexual abuse, and Donelan knew his days at the Hacienda were over. Donelan reacted with appropriate histrionics. He wrote to Sanchez that "Father Griego told me of you concern about me on the death of my son, Vaughn. Well, I do not believe that men should not cry; when I told Alan, Vaughn's brother about the situation, we embraced and both had a good cry for ourselves."<sup>45</sup> Donelan blamed "a family in the area" that was "trying to cause trouble" by spreading "rumors." The family was the Fryes, and the rumors were true.

In March 1976 the Colfax County Social Services Agency issued a report about the Hacienda. The cover letter to Archbishop Sanchez indicated that “some information and details were omitted from the report. We felt they were potentially harmful and unnecessary in light of your decision.”<sup>46</sup> The report therefore left out any mention of sexual abuse, but took note of the conditions that made it possible. Also in March 1976 Archbishop Sanchez appointed the Rev. J. Sabine Griego to help close down the Hacienda. Griego was himself in 1992 accused of abuse.<sup>47</sup> In April 1976, despite the agency report, and even after Vaughn’s death, Donelan was still in charge of the Hacienda.

Charles and Cruciata Todd first visited the Hacienda in early 1974. They were initially “amazed” and “enthusiastic,” they later wrote Archbishop Sanchez, and Cruciata taught there as a volunteer. The Todds were impressed by Donelan, who “prayed the Mass with extraordinary gentleness and dedication.” But shortly thereafter, “things began to change.” There were “small rebellions, boys running away,” staff turnover; “Father Ed also seemed to change.” This culminated on Holy Thursday 1975, when Donelan gave a bizarre homily.

The gist of it was that people of the church were ignoring the church and her priests; that we should feel sorry for priests, and do more to help them; that a priest carries a terrible burden and responsibility in that they, from and above all other men, have been chosen by God as His priests; that during the consecration, the priest had the authority, and the terrible responsibility, to command God to be present at the altar; that God, because He had allowed this man to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, must obey the priests and transubstantiate the bread and wine; and that we, the miscreant parishioners, must do everything we can to support our priests as they face this experience daily. Some of that sounds like good Catholic doctrine. Some of it sounds dangerous.<sup>48</sup>

Donelan had become the ultimate clericalist: He thought he could command God, and God had to obey.

The Todds noticed the increasing isolation of the boys; they “just stopped being as friendly” and “didn’t seem to want to be involved with ‘outsiders’ any more.” They were running away, and while running away one of them died.

Most recently, there was the tragic death of Vaughn Bishop. I tried to talk to his partner in that experience. All they boy would tell me is that they were escaping, that he was going home to his mother. Again, allowing for the fact that the kid wasn’t very bright, and that he had a great many emotional problems, there seemed to be something very hard and ugly that gave him such a strong motivation to take off across the mountains in the dead of winter.<sup>49</sup>

The Todds suspected that something was very, very wrong at the Hacienda.

So did Mrs. Francis Hephner, who wrote to Sanchez about the chaos, the lack of guidance at the Hacienda, and the stream of runaways:

Now comes the hard part, and with a sad heart I wrote it, but it seems there was something also very morally wrong at the Hacienda. When some of the boys that ran away – as much as five years ago, many of them would not answer when we asked them why they left, but a few who were a little more outspoken, said they never wanted to go back there again, because Father was a “queer.”

Despite the fact that “we dearly loved Father,” after speaking with the boys, she was “forced to believe it is true.”<sup>50</sup>

The Gary Frye family also knew what was wrong. Further, they knew that Donelan knew that they knew, and that he hated them for it. On June 4, 1976, Darlene Frye wrote to Archbishop Sanchez that she had done her best to keep the matter quiet and within the Church, as he had requested.

Since our visit with you on March 5<sup>th</sup>, we have done as you said, trying to keep things in the auspices of the Church. Needless to say, this has been a very hard thing for us to do.

I might add that a threat has also come through the Hacienda to “bomb” our house and get at least 1 Frye before we leave here. This was told us by a concerned neighbor and later confirmed by Alan. The threat was made by [----] – one of the boys staying up there. This incident seemed strange to us because the boy had never met us, nor do we know him. This leads to that some, not so nice things have been said in the presence of the boys, about us, by Father Ed. I don’t think it’s fair for us to have to keep a close eye on our children in fear of their safety. They are all teenagers except one, and having to keep them in the house at all times just isn’t right. They have a right to pursue their interests and visit their friends without fear. They shouldn’t have to be completely restricted while this continues to drag out . . . Father Ed left yesterday for Massachusetts taking [-----] and Sister Carmel with him. He will return alone with the boy. Father Ed is apparently under the impression that the Frye’s alone are responsible for condemning him and his Ranch. I only hope that God is watching over all of us that are involved in this and will see that Father Ed is a very sick man and needs help badly. I can only hope that we make it through all this with our faith intact and also know that we are doing the right thing. I, personally, feel like a walking lie! I have lied so much to people who want to know what happened up there – pretending that we don’t know anything that I feel terrible. The reason – so that Father Ed can come through this with dignity – whichever way it goes. This is becoming very hard for us to do when I have to fear for myself and the safety of my family.

I think something should be done, and it should be done quickly.

My final question is – why are you taking so long to finalize?

Darlene Frye wanted to believe that Donelan was “sick,” and not criminal. If Donelan was sick, it was right to protect him from publicity and the law. If he was a criminal, she



might be enabling him to continue committing crimes and escaping punishment. Darlene Frye, like many of the victims and their families, was suffering from a form of the Stockholm Syndrome.<sup>51</sup> Even victims often want to think of their abusers as sick rather than criminal. It is easier to accept being hurt by a person who does not have the full use of reason rather than by a malicious criminal.

In obeying Sanchez's request to keep the matter quiet to protect Donelan's reputation, Darlene Frye was inadvertently caught up in the network of lies that entangled the clergy of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe. Sanchez himself was living a lie. He had numerous girlfriends, and his own violation of celibacy dulled his conscience. He did not think about how he as Archbishop of Santa Fe was hurting young women by having affairs with them, and he gave no consideration to the harm abuse victims were suffering. The harm he did to the young women may not have been confined to affairs – he claimed he used condoms to prevent pregnancy, but they are notoriously unreliable, and there were ways of disposing of unwanted unborn children. His own behavior, and that of many of his priests, is one reason he took so long to act against Donelan.

On June 10, 1976, Paul Nichols wrote to Sanchez and attempted, in his ignorance of Sanchez's personal life, to appeal to Sanchez's humanity and conscience to end the nightmare of the Hacienda.

A boy died this past winter – froze to death running away from the 'ranch.' Dumb kid wasn't he? Makes 50 miles in the cold – then freezes! What a stupid thing to do, don't you think? Oh well – maybe he was just wild – who cares anyway – do you? Why did he run off? What a silly kid huh? Suppose we could ask him – what do you think he'd say Archbishop? Too bad we can't – he is dead. That little dumb stupid kid who for some reason got so mixed up that he ran into the freezing night is in a little cemetery in the mountains above Farley New Mexico now. Go there Archbishop – see what's left of a creature God put on earth for better reasons. See it and listen – perhaps you too will hear something in the wind of your conscience saying pleadingly – do something please, for all the loss and grief to God and his creatures, and for me too – help me.

Father Ed still continues to operate his ranch.

Father Ed still continues to do anything he wishes to! Why Archbishop for God's sake – why? Must we be so blind to the problem and its effect on its victims?<sup>52</sup>

Sanchez's blindness was caused by the massive beam in his own eye, but most bishops who tolerated abusers were not themselves sexually active. But they were also blinded – by clericalism, by fear of loss of donations, by fear of disapproval from Rome for not maintaining a *bella figura* – in American terms, for damaging good public relations.

### *Continuing Damage*

The secrecy that everyone kept about Donelan enabled him to continue his clerical career. Not only the Church but the state kept the abuse secret.<sup>53</sup> In 1983 and 1984 the parishioners at the parishes around Mountainair, New Mexico, complained first to Archbishop Sanchez (who ignored them) and then to the newspaper of Donelan's "refusal to marry couples and baptize children, and refusal to give [illegible] or last rites, plus other wrongdoings" such as having "a gun in the pouch he carries with him at all times."<sup>54</sup>

In 1986 Archbishop Sanchez assigned Donelan as administrator of Immaculate Conception parish in Cimarron, New Mexico. Cimarron is the location of Philmont, the national camp for the Boy Scouts, and hosts thousands of boys every year. In 1987 Sanchez assigned Donelan as administrator of St. Joseph's in Springer, New Mexico. This was the parish for the New Mexico Boys' School; Donelan followed the abuser Rev. Irving Klister, who had been pastor there when Vaughn Bishop froze to death in attempting to escape Donelan (see above). Donelan's last assignment in 1990 was at a hospital. In 1993, Lorraine Polance wrote to Rev. Ron Wolf, the Chancellor of the Santa Fe archdiocese, about Donelan's style of pastoral care:

I am at Lovelace [Medical Center] three or four times each week. Nurses, etc. ask me to visit patients with possible amputations as well as heart patients. I have heard with my own ears patients cry because 'Father Ed' won't come to visit. He refuses to attend a patient who is dying; talk with families in grief. Not the least complaint is that he hasn't bathed, probably since his ordination. I personally have sat in the chapel when he was present and nearly lost my lunch.<sup>55</sup>

Shortly after this, Donelan's past caught up with him.

In October 1993 Ron Wolf notified Donelan that he had "received information that appears indicative of the fact that a serious offense against the Church has been committed by you. On the basis of this information, it appears that you have been accused of sexual abuse while you were in charge of the Boy's Ranch."<sup>56</sup> In January 1994, an attorney representing a victim contacted Rev. Ron Wolf, Chancellor of the Archdiocese. Only then did Archbishop Michael Sheehan put Donelan on administrative leave. His abuse led to the death of a boy; he was not disciplined for that. But now he might cost the archdiocese money, and that called for action. In February 1994 Sheehan retired Donelan and gave him "the usual pension provided by the Priests' Relief Fund."<sup>57</sup> Another month passed, and Sheehan asked Sr. Nancy Kazik to send Donelan "a kindly worded letter" "asking him to move from the parish to a location more suitable to his retirement status."<sup>58</sup> Donelan died shortly thereafter.

### *Light in the Darkness*

After Pierre Nichols left the Hacienda, and after Vaughn Bishop died, Nichols had a conversation with a fifteen-year-old boy who was leaving the Hacienda. It provides the only whiff of Christianity in this whole sad story. The boy was leaving behind his

younger brother at the Hacienda, and knew that the boys were learning to do evil things there.

*Boy:* “God is going to be very mad. Small boys will grow up and do what Father has taught them to do.”

*Pierre:* “You are really lucky, compared to your younger brother because he is not smart enough to know sometimes what is right and wrong. Oh yes, life is short. Look at Vaughn. Gone already! But we are alive right now and can make up for our wrongs. The part that Father will have to make up or pay for will certainly be great, for he was responsible for you children. Do not feel guilt for yourself, life is ahead of you. Tomorrow the past will be over.”

*Boy:* “My poor brother! Father Ed will burn in hell for him, won’t he?”

*Pierre:* “Perhaps, or maybe he will someday really say he’s sorry. Maybe he is really a sick person, and doesn’t realize these wrongs. But rather than for us to feel he is going to die in hell for what he has done, let’s sometimes remember to pray for him. Yah! Because his soul is sick and needs help so much.”

*Boy:* “Yes, that’s right.”

*Pierre:* “While at the ranch, I loved him! So do you! It is hard to face cause of how bad he really is. But we have loved him, and for that reason we can care a little more to help him by praying...to keep him away from hells fire.”

*Boy:* “Yes, like I pray for Vaughn, cause who knows,, maybe God is hoping someone will pray... “that’s alright Vaughn, you can come to heaven, I forgive you, someone prayed for you.”

*Pierre:* “That’s right.”

*Boy:* “I wish I could talk...I wish I could do something to help!”

*Pierre:* “You can not, because you are not of age.”

*Boy:* Boy, wait till I’m old enough! Boy, I’ll tell everything I know...like I told you!”

*Pierre:* “Let’s hope for your brother’s sake and others too, it won’t go on much longer.”

As far as I know the boy never had a chance to tell his story; I hope my attempt to tell the story of Donelan and the Hacienda will let the victims know that they are not forgotten, and that abuse in the Church won’t go on much longer.

Although even victims suffering from the Stockholm Syndrome sometimes want to mischaracterize their abusers as sick rather than criminal, in the deepest sense crimes of abuse show a sickness of soul even unto death, a sickness that only a Divine Physician can heal. Donelan used chaos to control people; he created a vertiginous environment in which he was the only point of reference, and the boys clung to him in desperation. He, therefore, as a priest and “Father,” could control the boys sexually and spiritually, the most intimate control possible. Why did he want to do it? Was he a pure narcissist, “egoistical,”<sup>59</sup> as his own sister described him? Why didn’t someone, for his own good and the good of his victims, put a stop to his abuse as soon as possible?

The boy and Pierre Nichols show an extraordinary depth of Christian maturity in their conversation, and I was humbled when I read it: “ex ore infantium.” If only popes and bishops had shown the same fear of a God who is angry when children are harmed and led into a life of depravity,<sup>60</sup> if only popes and bishops had shown a love even for abusers, a love that would tear them from their sins, humble them, make them see reality so that they could be saved from the everlasting fires. But popes and bishops left the abusers uncorrected and the victims unhealed. Abusers can only hope that the victims are better Christians than the popes and bishops are, and that the prayers of destroyed innocents will not cast down to hell, but, as the boy’s prayers perhaps did for Vaughn, and maybe even for Donelan, open the path to heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> “There is nothing I would like better than to spend my priesthood working among the American Indians” (Letter from Edward F. Donelan to [Archbishop Francis Byrne of Santa Fe], May 1, 1949). There is no indication that Donelan ever worked with the American Indians.

<sup>2</sup> Lee Ferrero, “Black Hatter Farley Priest Is Making Bid to Aid Youngsters,” *Raton Daily Range*, n. d.

<sup>3</sup> Signed by Father Edward F. Donelan, May 10, 1957.

<sup>4</sup> “Father Ed came to the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in 1956 and was assigned at his request to juvenile work in 1958” (*New Mexican*, “Father Ed Speaks,” May 8, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Fr. Ed to Most Rev. Edwin V. Byrne, Archbishop of Santa Fe, March 28, 1961.

<sup>6</sup> “Memo from Office of the Superintendent to All Staff Members” July 9, 1961.

<sup>7</sup> “On June 27, 1961, I was informed that my mail which arrived at the New Mexico Boys’ School would be opened. I do not agree to this as many of the letters that I receive contain confidential information: this information is sent to me because I am a Catholic priest and bound to keep such confidences” (Edward Donelan, Monthly Report for June, 1961).

<sup>8</sup> *Albuquerque Journal*, “Leach Confirms Garitson Firing at Boys School,” September 23, 1970.

<sup>9</sup> Lee Ferrero, “Black Hatted Farley Priest Is Making Bid to Aid Youngsters,” *Raton Daily Range*, n. d.

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Charles O. Todd III and Cruciatia A. Todd to Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez, April 13, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Eileen Stanton, “Throw-Away Boys: Who Salvages Them?” n.d., p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Letter from James P. Davis, Archbishop of Santa Fe to Mr. Howard C. Leach, Secretary of Corrections, State of New Mexico, March 22, 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from James P. Davis, Archbishop of Santa Fe to Mr. Howard C. Leach, Secretary of Corrections, State of New Mexico, March 22, 1971.

<sup>14</sup> *John Doe v. Howard Leach and Felix Rodriguez*, Court of Appeals for the State of New Mexico, Opinion 1999-NMCA-117, Docket No. 18, 638., August 30, 1999. The court denied certiorari to the plaintiff, because the New Mexico statute at the time “did not require anyone to report incidents of abuse” and further that “Defendants simply had no constitutional duty to protect Plaintiff.”

<sup>15</sup> Newspapers articles frequently refer to Donelan only as Father Ed because “Father Ed doesn’t want his last name known” (Margie Taylor, “Father Ed Is a Big Man,” *Albuquerque Tribune*, January 2, 1967). No one seemed to wonder why.

<sup>16</sup> Bruce Herron, “Priest Who ‘Begs’ for Funds to Help Juvenile Delinquents To Be Honored” *Albuquerque Tribune*, June 5, 1969.

<sup>17</sup> In 1974 the Rev. Bernard Bissonnette was appointed chaplain of the Springer school, although there were already allegations of sexual abuse against him, allegations that led to his treatment at the Servants of the Paraclete facility in Jemez Springs, New Mexico. The school superintendent fired Bissonnette in 1978 after “more than two boys” had accused the priest of sexual abuse (*New Mexican*, “Bissonnette ‘Persona Non Grata’ in S[anta] F[e] Archdiocese, Official Says,” April 19, 1993). But beyond removing Bissonnette as chaplain, neither the state nor the church acted against him in 1978.

<sup>18</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Father Ed to Friends and Benefactors, n. d.

<sup>21</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 2.

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- <sup>22</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 2.
- <sup>23</sup> State of New Mexico, Health and Human Services Department, Colfax County Social Services Agency, *Report on the Hacienda de los Muchachos* (March 12, 1976) p. 1
- <sup>24</sup> State of New Mexico, Health and Human Services Department, Colfax County Social Services Agency, *Report on the Hacienda de los Muchachos* (March 12, 1976), 1-2.
- <sup>25</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 3.
- <sup>26</sup> Letter from M. G. Peretto to Father G. Sabine Griego, March 22, 1976.
- <sup>27</sup> Eileen Stanton, "Throw-Away Boys: Who Salvages Them?" n.d., p. 2.
- <sup>28</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 2.
- <sup>29</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 3.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 5. There is no confirmation of Nichol's suspicions about Brother Earl.
- <sup>31</sup> State of New Mexico, Health and Human Services Department, Colfax County Social Services Agency, *Report on the Hacienda de los Muchachos* (March 12, 1976), p. 3.
- <sup>32</sup> Letter from John P. Davidson to William J. Bingham, Counsel for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, August 2, 1976.
- <sup>33</sup> Memo from Archbishop Robert Sanchez about conversation with Donelan's sister, July 12, 1976.
- <sup>34</sup> State of New Mexico, Health and Human Services Department, Colfax County Social Services Agency, *Report on the Hacienda de los Muchachos* March 12, 1976, p. 4.
- <sup>35</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 4.
- <sup>36</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 5.
- <sup>37</sup> Transcript of Conversation between Pierre Nichols and "one 15 yr. old boy" on February 12, 1976, p. 1, attached to letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976.
- <sup>38</sup> Transcript of Conversation between Pierre Nichols and "one 15 yr. old boy" on February 12, 1976, p. 2, attached to letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976.
- <sup>39</sup> Transcript of Conversation between Pierre Nichols and "one 15 yr. old boy" on February 12, 1976, p. 2, attached to letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976.
- <sup>40</sup> *Albuquerque Journal*, "Boy Dies of Exposure," January 29, 1976, B-20.
- <sup>41</sup> Another graduate of the Hacienda had a suspicious death. Donelan wrote, "Last Friday night one of my sons, who was here some years ago, was killed in a one car accident with his wife. This young man, Mike, was one of my 'pride and joys'" (Letter from Father Ed to Archbishop Robert Sanchez of Santa Fe, February 1, 1976). Fatal one-car accidents are often disguised suicides.
- <sup>42</sup> Leon J. Podles, *Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church* (Baltimore: Crossland Publications, 2008), pp. 22-32.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 6. Nichols was unaware of Klister's past.
- <sup>44</sup> Letter from [Pierre Nichols] to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 20, 1976, p. 6.
- <sup>45</sup> Letter from Father Ed to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, February 1, 1976.
- <sup>46</sup> Letter from Janet E. Bryan, Field Office Manger, to Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez, March 30, 1976.
- <sup>47</sup> Anne Constable, "The Tragic Fallout of Molestation," *Santa Fe New Mexican*, June 30, 2002. During the deposition of Archbishop Sanchez, it came out that Grigio admitted abusing children. *John Doe I et al v. Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe et al*, Second Judicial District Court, County of Bernalillo, State of New Mexico, cases CV-91-11688 et al, Deposition of Robert F. Sanchez, January 12, 1994, p. 254, ll. 8-9. He was never prosecuted and, according to the article by Constable, after resigning "worked briefly as a hospital chaplain and psychologist with the state Corrections department."
- <sup>48</sup> Letter from Charles O. Todd III and Cruciata A. Todd to Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez, April 13, 1976.
- <sup>49</sup> Letter from Charles O. Todd III and Cruciata A. Todd to Archbishop Robert F. Sanchez, April 13, 1976.
- <sup>50</sup> Letter from Mrs. Francis Hephner to Archbishop Sanchez, June 5, 1976.
- <sup>51</sup> Leon J. Podles, *Sacrilege: Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church* (Baltimore: Crossland Publications, 2008) p. 272.
- <sup>52</sup> Letter from Paul Nichols to Archbishop Robert Sanchez, June 10, 1976. There is no indication that Paul Nichols and Pierre Nichols were related.
- <sup>53</sup> In addition to the Colfax County Social Services Agency "Report on the Hacienda de los Muchachos," cited above, Pierre Nichols on August 16, 1976, wrote to New Mexico Governor Jerry Apadaca and to New Mexico U. S. Senator Domenici from New Mexico that "I have never written to anyone in as high an office

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as yourself, simply because I have never felt the need to before. Presently though, I am involved in a very serious matter which, if handled improperly, would cause quite a scandal. One that would focus a lot of criticism on our own state. I am referring to a complicated matter involving child abuse (sexual, etc.) at a boys ranch. I have written to and talked several times with the Archbishop about the subject, and am now appealing to you, to ask if you could possibly give some attention to this matter.

...I know what I am talking about when I support any effort to have closed, the Hacienda Boys Ranch and or particularly the removal of its founder-manager, Father Ed.

My interviews with boys who had once been at the ranch, verify in shocking detail some of the things I had suspected. My dairies over the years become even more meaningful as I now realize why certain things happened as they did. Many children have had to suffer psychologically and even physically due to one man's perversion. Everyone would agree, yes...something should be done, but no one seems able to help enough to bring out this case and stop the wrongs. I have submitted much material and patience to the Archbishop ever since February, and I have yet to see him take any concrete action. I have consulted in much length with State Social Service people locally as well as in Santa Fe, and they seem to feel helpless in causing more action."

There is no indication these letters were received by the Governor and Senator, or if received were read, or if read led to any action.

<sup>54</sup> Gary [illegible], "Charges Are Leveled at Priest," *Valencia County News Bulletin*, Vol. 74, No. 13, Sunday, February [date obscured], 1984.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from Lorraine J. Polance to Rev. Ron Wolf, Chancellor, Archdiocese of Santa Fe, October 8, 1993.

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Very Rev. Ron Wolf, Chancellor, to Rev. Edward Donelan, October 5, 1993. Wolf pretended to be surprised that Donelan has been accused of sexual abuse; but Donelan's file had accusations going back to the early 1970s.

<sup>57</sup> Letter from Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan to Rev. Doug Raun, President, Priests Relief Fund, February 14, 1992.

<sup>58</sup> Memorandum from Archbishop Michael J. Sheehan to Sr. Nancy Kazik, OSF, Vice-Chancellor / Case Manager, March 10, 1994.

<sup>59</sup> Memo from Archbishop Robert Sanchez about conversation with Donelan's sister, July 12, 1976.

<sup>60</sup> Archbishop Sanchez claimed "I was unaware of any lasting damage that a child might suffer" from being sexually abused. *John Doe I et al v. Roman Catholic Church of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe et al*, Second Judicial District Court, County of Bernalillo, State of New Mexico, cases CV-91-11688 et al, Deposition of Robert F. Sanchez, January 12, 1994, p. 98, ll. 13-14.