

Drug Sales and Misbehavior in the Cathedral Rectory Attributed to a Monsignor

A Response

Monsignor Kevin Wallin of the Diocese of Bridgeport was arrested in Waterbury on 3 January by agents of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency and Connecticut state police. He has been charged with interstate conspiracy to sell crystal meth. Reports have cited Msgr. Wallin's attempt to acquire a Waterbury sex shop business for possible laundering of profits and also his participation in "sex parties" in the rectory of the cathedral parish of St. Augustine in Bridgeport. Wallin had served as pastor of St. Augustine (2002–2011) and of St. Peter, Danbury (1996–2002). Prior to that, he was secretary to Bishop William W. Curtis and Bishop Edward M. Egan.

Read the official response from the Diocese of Bridgeport (16 January):

http://www.bridgeportdiocese.com/index.php/fcc/article/statement_on_msgr_kevin_wallin

Read the story in the *New York Times* (20 January):

http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/21/nyregion/drug-arrest-adds-name-to-a-connecticut-congregations-prayer-list-its-ex-pastor.html?_r=0

Read the detailed background story, with timeline and photographs in the *Connecticut Post* (26 January):

<http://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Collared-The-life-and-times-of-a-meth-priest-4226268.php#photo-4087616>

Read this editorial from the *National Catholic Reporter* (1 February):

<http://ncronline.org/news/accountability/real-scandal-our-church>

Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport (VOTF-Bridgeport) is deeply concerned about the issues raised by these events. Following is a statement from Dr. Joseph O'Callaghan, historian, author, and recipient of Voice of the Faithful's Catherine of Siena award. He is a past president of VOTF-Bridgeport.

Still Another Scandal Hits the Diocese of Bridgeport

By Joseph F. O'Callaghan

The arrest and indictment of Monsignor Kevin Wallin for involvement in a ring distributing crystal methamphetamine is another grave blow to the reputation of the Catholic Church. It raises questions about the leadership of the Diocese of Bridgeport and the nature of the priesthood.

Once a trusted aide of Bishops Walter W. Curtis, Edward M. Egan, and William E. Lori, and most recently rector of the cathedral of St. Augustine in Bridgeport, the bishop's very own church, Wallin was given a sabbatical for health reasons in July 2011. Apparently the real reason was reports that Wallin had been seen cross-dressing and holding sex parties in the cathedral rectory. Not until nearly a year later, in May 2012, did Bishop Lori suspend Wallin's faculties for public ministry. He did so because Wallin had failed to keep in touch. Did Bishop Lori conclude that Wallin's immoral behavior was acceptable and did not bar him from functioning as a priest? Lawyers consulted by Bishop Lori concluded that Wallin had done nothing illegal, but was the bishop concerned that Wallin's immoral conduct was unworthy of a spiritual leader of the church? If Bishop Lori ordered a health assessment, what steps did he take to monitor him? Were Wallin's problems a recent development or did they have a longer history? Were they known to his fellow priests or to the bishop? Did the bishop offer his brother priest counseling or other psychological support prior to July 2011? Was a "black wall of silence" erected around the whole affair so that the faithful would not be scandalized? The Diocesan statement asks for prayers for Wallin—and indeed we should offer them—but it says nothing about prayers for the victims to whom he sold methamphetamines.

The lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the Diocese is not surprising given its efforts to cover up the sexual abuse of our boys and girls by at least 32 diocesan priests. Among them are such prominent diocesan leaders as Monsignors Gregory Smith, Charles Stubbs, and Martin Ryan, who are no longer serving in the priesthood. In addition, Bishop Lori did not come clean about the immoral and financial misconduct of Monsignors Michael Moynihan and Jude Fay until forced to do so.

Are these the sort of men we want as leaders of our Diocese?

Wallin's arrest brings to a sad end the career of "a gifted, compassionate and accomplished priest," as the diocesan statement rightly described him. But it ought to prompt a serious discussion within the Catholic community about the qualities of those summoned to spiritual leadership as ordained priests. Catholics have to ask whether the mandatory obligation of celibacy imposes a harmful burden on priests and whether women ought to be admitted to the priesthood. What are the standards of conduct for a priest in the Diocese of Bridgeport? Is he only obliged to do nothing illegal or should he be required to act at all times in a moral

manner consistent with the teachings of the Church? The steady decline in the number of priests, the aging of priests, the terrible sin of pedophilia among priests, and the downfall of Monsignor Wallin are all signs of a sickness in the priesthood. It is time to seek a remedy for this awful malady that threatens the Eucharist, the center of Catholic life.

Voice of the Faithful in the Diocese of Bridgeport, dedicated to the renewal of our Church, believes that the time for an honest conversation about the priesthood is now.

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