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# Church's year of turmoil Louisville hit hard by flood of allegations



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The revelations began erupting in early January, alleging cover-ups of abuse by priests in Boston. By summer, it was clear that the Archdiocese of Louisville and the Diocese of Lexington would be hit particularly hard in what one Catholic commentator called "the long Lent of 2002."

Since The Courier-Journal published a story in mid-April about the Rev. Louis E. Miller retiring amid allegations of past abuse, 200 plaintiffs have sued the Archdiocese of Louisville, alleging sexual abuse by people connected with the church.

In all, the suits accuse 26 priests, two religious brothers, two teachers and a volunteer elementary-school coach. Three priests -- Miller and the Revs. Daniel C. Clark and James Hargadon -- are awaiting trial on criminal charges. Eight archdiocesan priests and two pastors from religious orders have been permanently barred from ministry.

And Lexington Bishop J. Kendrick Williams resigned in June over abuse allegations dating from when he was a priest in the Archdiocese of Louisville.

All three of the smaller dioceses in Kentucky -- Lexington, Covington and Owensboro -- also face lawsuits, as do the Archdiocese of Indianapolis and a Floyd County, Ind.-based province of Conventual Franciscans.

"It is tragic, what we've experienced here in Kentucky," said Jane Chiles, former director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, the lobbying group for Kentucky's bishops, and now a member of the National Review Board set up by

IN-DEPTH

## Crisis in the Church

In the first comprehensive examination of the lawsuits filed against the archdiocese since April, The Courier-Journal takes a detailed look at the allegations and the people making them.



EXPANDED COVERAGE

Click [here](#) for a complete list of stories dealing with the lawsuits against the archdiocese.



## SEX ABUSE SCANDAL

Important dates in 2002 in the sexual abuse scandal in the Roman Catholic Church and the Archdiocese of Louisville

### JANUARY

6 The Boston Globe begins avalanche of revelations about the shuffling of abusive priests to new assignments.

### MARCH

7 Palm Beach Bishop Anthony O'Connell becomes highest-ranking cleric to resign over past abuse.

### APRIL

8 Files show Boston priest Paul Shanley stayed in ministry despite past abuse and advocacy for man-boy sex.

12 Louisville parochial-school teacher Joseph B. Greene III arrested on charges of abusing a student in 1970s.

14 The Courier-Journal reports retirement of the Rev. Louis E. Miller amid allegations of past abuse.

19 Michael Turner of Prospect sues the Archdiocese of Louisville, accusing Miller of past sexual abuse in the first of 200 lawsuits filed this year.

30 Suit against Diocese of Lexington accuses five priests.

### MAY

7 Holy Family Church pastor Thomas Creagh resigns over accusations of past abuse.

11 St. Leonard Church pastor Joseph T. Herp resigns over accusations of past abuse.

31 The Rev. J. Irvin Mouser placed on leave from Bardstown parishes over



The Rev. Louis Miller

bishops to monitor their handling of the abuse issue.

"Every time I think it's over, it starts up again," said Louisville Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly in an interview Dec. 13, the day he removed a parish pastor for the fourth time this year. "I would like for it all to be over, but on the other hand, (for) people who are real victims, I want them to get the healing they deserve."

Although the archdiocese says it's too early to determine the financial impact of the crisis, it has imposed a hiring freeze beginning tomorrow.

"My impression is a number of our parishes are facing economic challenges that they haven't faced in more recent years," said Brian Reynolds, chancellor and chief administrative officer of the archdiocese.

"How much is attributed to the sexabuse crisis, how much to the economy, how much to increased costs elsewhere, I can't measure. All charities, including the church, are feeling the impact of smaller contributions this year."

Plaintiffs in the abuse cases say 2002 will be remembered as the year they felt they finally could go public -- and be believed.

"They've been able to gain support from each other in coming out with their stories," said Karen Mouser of New Haven, Ky., one of 10 women to bring accusations against former Louisville archdiocese priest Robert Bowling, now on leave in the Diocese of Reno in Nevada. "They know they're not alone."

Louisville native Ron Landry, one of 78 plaintiffs accusing Miller of abuse, said the lawsuits have forced Catholic bishops to deal with abuse issues openly.

"What we're doing now is the only thing that's got the church's attention," he said.

What has made these cases especially volatile is the mixture of sexual and spiritual abuse, according to alleged victims, who have told of being abused in sacristies, rectories and confessionals.

Two-thirds of the Archdiocese of Louisville plaintiffs surveyed by The Courier-Journal in September said they were no longer practicing Catholics -- and most of those said it's because of abuse by priests.

"Because they were in such authority in the Catholic Church, they were the basis of everything we believed," said Mouser.

Similar tales were told across the country.

"In abusing their child victims . . . priests invoked sacraments, their own exalted status, the cult of sacred secrecy, and the wrath of God," wrote Boston Globe columnist James Carroll, a former priest, in his new book, "Toward a New Catholic Church."

"In addition to all else, their assaults were acts of blasphemy," he wrote.

Meanwhile, innocent priests say they've been tainted with guilt by association, their thin ranks stretched further as they filled in for those removed from ministry.

"They're already overburdened, and this, of course, has made some things tougher," said Kelly. "And we're suffering from a dearth of vocations. That can be very discouraging.

"It takes a lot of supernatural hope to deal with that sort of thing, but I find that virtue in our priests," he added.

In an essay last summer in America, a national Catholic magazine, Louisville priest Ron Knott wrote of nightmares and stress that were the worst he has experienced in a 32-year career.

Knott, assigned to recruit young men to the priesthood, wrote that this "hard job suddenly seems impossible." He said he even found himself once covering his Roman collar with his hand while stopped at a traffic light.

"But I have also felt a surge of hope," he wrote. "My source of hope comes from the pews, when I share the Scriptures and break the bread with faithful Catholics."

Reynolds said the archdiocese is determined to show similar resilience, even amid the time-consuming process of defending against the lawsuits.

The archdiocese has appointed a review board, made up mostly of lay people, to advise Kelly on abuse accusations.

The archdiocese also is revising its policies to conform with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' pledge in June to bar abusers from ministry. It is organizing support groups and education sessions for parishes, Reynolds said.

Nationally, Chiles said the church is also launching a study of how pervasive the abuse problem has been and how churches can best prevent abuse in the future.

Mouser said any help for victims is welcome, although she noted, "It will take longer than a year to gain back the confidence of the people."

Susan Archibald, president of The Linkup, a Louisville-based national advocacy group for victims, said dioceses' responses have been mixed across the country.

"Some bishops get it right, and some don't get it at all," she said, but with pressure from an outraged laity and the legal system, "change in the church will come either voluntarily or not."

Chiles lamented that the church's moral credibility on social policy issues has been compromised.

"I don't want to say we have lost all of that, but certainly it has eroded," she said, adding that the bishops will only regain that trust through their actions.

Kelly, the former general secretary of the national bishops' conference, recalled that when

bishops made policy statements on nuclear arms and economic issues in the 1980s, people listened.

"So when I see it now, I grieve," he said, citing how little attention people paid last month when the bishops cautioned against an invasion of Iraq.

Much of the crisis in the coming year will play out in court.

Miller, Clark and Hargadon have dates in criminal courts.

Though the filing of lawsuits has slowed to a trickle, lawyers for the archdiocese and the plaintiffs will continue obtaining documents and testimony in the pending cases.

Meanwhile, lay movements in some parts of the country will continue to seek more of a decision-making role in a church where most power still remains with bishops.

A group called Voice of the Faithful, launched in a suburban Boston church basement last winter, has grown rapidly throughout the Northeast, although it has hardly taken root in Louisville or elsewhere in the Midwest.

"I'm hoping it's because our faithful feel their voice is being heard," Kelly said, noting that lay people hold many leadership positions in parishes, schools and the archdiocese. But, he acknowledged: "I should do more to listen."

The Rev. Thomas Reese, editor of the national Catholic magazine America, said some people will call for more bishops to follow Boston Cardinal Bernard Law's example and resign, though he was skeptical about how many would.

"The evidence is overwhelming that Law did a worse job than any other bishop in the country," Reese said. "Some bishops made mistakes, but none were as egregious as Law."

Kelly said he has no plans to resign.

"The present crisis, as painful as it is, is absolutely part of my ministry," he said. "Even though we are in great pain here, I would never wish to withdraw from my ministry."

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