

Priest's file was clean of allegations

Editor's note: The following letter is in response to Melissa Wangall's series "Emotional Stigmata: Living as the victim of clergy sexual abuse." Part one of the series was published in the July 20-26, 2005, issue, part two in the July 27-Aug. 2, 2005, issue. Part three appears on page B1 of this week's issue.

After claims against Father Ted Feeley were made by two individuals in 2002, St. Anthony's pastor promptly informed parishioners of the allegations, both from the pulpit and in a letter sent to all parish households. These were the first reports of misconduct the order had ever received about Father Ted, who died in 1991. There is nothing in his personnel file that even hints at the alleged sexual abuse. Nonetheless, the order took the claims very seriously and has tried to help these individuals obtain counseling. Where it has been desired, the order is continuing to pay for ongoing counseling.

With respect to Father Feeley's assignment history, like most members of the order, he held numerous posts over the course of his ministry. The pattern and timing of his assignments do not appear to be exceptional for that time in the province's history, which was marked by a surplus of friars, a reorganization of the province and a succession of leadership changes—all of which prompted more fluid movement of personnel than we typically see today.

There are no witnesses to most of what is alleged to have occurred, so we are not in a position to make a point-by-point response. But as readers take in these stories, we hope they will remember that this order of religious men, dating to St. Francis of Assisi, has a remarkable history of selfless service to the poor, the sick, the homeless, and the people of faith communities such as St. Anthony's. That's not to say they are incapable of doing wrong, but the record shows they have done, and continue to do, tremendous good for our world.

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