

Deposition gives glimpse of \"clerical culture\"

Tom Roberts | Jul. 23, 2009 NCR Today

In discussion of the clergy sex abuse crisis the term "culture" is often used in reference to the clergy or, more specifically, the hierarchy.

The term crops up again in the deposition of Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus Raymond E. Goedert of Chicago. The deposition was taken by Atty. Jeffrey Anderson on November 13, 2007, and was released Tuesday, July 21, as part of a settlement of a Chicago case.

The [deposition](#) [1] is now posted at BishopAccountability.org. This is certainly not easy summer reading, and you have slog through mountains of detail to get a sense of the whole. But it demonstrates why the documentation in this awful chapter of church history can be so important.

Bishop Goedert did nothing intentionally malicious or out of step with the "culture" of the time, but his answers indicate that there indeed was, and still is, a culture that is set apart in its operation and unspoken rules and expectations from the mainstream of society. One could suggest, of course, that we Catholics expect our clerics and leaders to be set a bit apart, but the removal from the mainstream in this case has little to do with pursuing sanctity and everything to do with protecting the reputation of individuals accused and of the institution.

In one instance, for example, Goedert, in explaining the "confidentiality" (he prefers that term to secrecy) with which the church handled abuse cases, pointed out that the victims often preferred discretion over public disclosure.

One can only presume, however, that these are many of the same people who, when they realized that the church was merely shuffling priests around and not removing them, were willing to go public ultimately and sue the church to stop the practice.

BishopAccountability.com is an invaluable repository of the documentation available on the abuse crisis. The documentation -- often difficult to get through -- ultimately contains the most thorough record of what went on.

Source URL (retrieved on 07/27/2017 - 18:04): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/deposition-gives-glimpse-clerical-culture>

Links:

[1] http://www.bishop-accountability.org/depo/2007_11_13_Goedert_Raymond/#deposition