

SSPX — 'Sympathetic to Perverts'

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TRANSCRIPT

February 18, 2000. A single shot rings out, shattering the nighttime silence of Topeka, Kansas.

A young man lies dead. Next to his body, a suicide note — the last known thought of 26-year-old Michael Gonzalez — before he pulled the trigger.

In the note: the reason for ending his life, tracing back more than 10 years.

Jassy Jacas: "It's a bigger betrayal that the SSPX has chosen to handle these cases like this."

It turns out Michael's life and story is just one among many stories of vulnerable kids, preyed upon — and covered up — by an organization bent on hiding the truth.

Theresa Gonzalez: "He told me in little increments that it wasn't just one time that it happened, that there were other occasions that it happened."

All hidden by a controversial society of Catholic priests, proving itself no different from scores of other dioceses it looks down on — all while draping itself in the pomp of traditional Catholicism, covering over a network of lies, spanning continents — and now the focus of a nearly year-long criminal investigation, details that have been shared with Church Militant for months.

Fr. Ramon Angles

Father Ramon Angles, an influential priest in the SSPX — a breakaway Catholic sect with its own hierarchy and society of clergy throughout the world, adherents to the Traditional Latin Mass and largely rejecting the Church's Second Vatican Council.

It was Angles whom Michael Gonzalez identified as having sodomized him when he was 14 years old, confiding his terrible secret to his oldest sister.

Theresa Gonzalez: "Finally he broke down one day and he just started crying and he told



me who it was. He had confided in me and told me it was Fr. Angles. that every time that my brother was called to the office Fr. Angles would abuse him."

The serial abuse changed young Michael, causing him to turn in on himself, even skipping his eighth-grade graduation from St. Mary's Academy in St. Mary's Kansas, the campus seen in this footage taken by a former student in the late 1980s.

Theresa Gonzalez: "We all showed up for his graduation, and he didn't even show up for it. I noticed that day that his behavior changed, his mannerisms changed, and he really shut down."

The abuse destroyed Michael, leading to a life of alcoholism, depression and a confused sexuality.

Theresa Gonzalez: "Ultimately he took his life. He wasn't able to cope with it. It was a downward spiral. He never finished high school. He was just getting in trouble after that, and he couldn't deal with it."

On the night of February 18, 2000, Michael, unable to cope any further, called his ex-girlfriend.



Fr. Ramon Angles



Fr. Ramon Angles, as district superior in Ireland

Theresa Gonzalez: "And while they were on the phone, my brother ended up saying that he was going to kill himself, and — the people that he was living with, he got a hold of a gun and shot himself in the mouth."

Theresa recalls how odd it was that, years earlier, right around the time of Michael's abuse, Fr. Angles canceled almost \$20,000 dollars of debt her family owed to St. Mary's Academy.

Theresa Gonzalez: "Because I remember my mom saying, 'Oh, we don't owe the college any money anymore,' and I was like, 'Oh, that's neat.' So one day I'm kind of cleaning up the house, and I find this letter that says, 'All of your debt is canceled if you do not speak badly about the academy and what has happened here.'"

Christine Niles: "Who wrote the letter?"

Theresa Gonzalez: "The letter was signed [by] Fr. Angles."

Kurt Chione, who taught at St. Mary's Academy in the late 1980s, remembers the terrible secret Michael confided to him all those years ago, when Michael was a student.



Fr. Ramon Angles

Kurt Chione: "And he said it was one of the priests here at the school."

Church Militant: "One of the SSPX priests at the school?"

Kurt Chione: "Yes, one of the SSPX priests. And I tried to get him to tell me which one it was, but he wouldn't tell me."

Kurt reported the crime to Angles — having no idea it was Angles himself who was the alleged perpetrator. He also went to the police, many of whom had close ties to the SSPX and who blew him off.

Kurt Chione: "And he was very angry with me and he says, 'If you believe anything that kid says you're crazy. You need to worry about your job here and quit getting involved with other things like this.' And he was very angry with me."

Two weeks later, Kurt was fired.

Kurt Chione: "And it wasn't too long after that that I was let go, that I was told that I could not come back the following year, that I was told that my contract had been rescinded, even though I was offered a contract for the following year."

Church Militant: "So what reasons did they give for not renewing your contract?"

Kurt Chione: "No reason, nor would they give me any reasons."



The Kansas Bureau of Investigation is conducting a major criminal probe of the SSPX for both abuse and cover-up

Fast forward almost 30 years. A Kansas state investigator contacted Kurt to speak with him about the rape of Michael Gonzalez, part of a much larger statewide investigation of sex abuse and cover-up by the SSPX, with the focal point being St. Mary's, Kansas — a serene, picturesque community of faithful Catholics all supporting the SSPX, many unaware that it is a bastion of corruption, abuse and cover-up — deceiving them for decades about many of the priests who have passed through there that they know.

Kurt Chione: "And he said, 'What if I told you that it was Fr. Angles?' And I said I would totally believe it. And then he told me about the suicide note that had been left."

Looking back, there were clues. In addition recalling that Fr. Angles would lurk around the Gonzalez family, Kurt recalls the priest also surrounded himself with his favorite group of boys.

Kurt Chione: "He always had what we used to always call his harem of boys, of his favorite boys, which again, rang a bell in my head, too. And it was only boys, never girls."

Another eyewitness testifies to Angles' cover-up of sexual grooming.

In 1989, Fr. John Rizzo, a former priest of the SSPX who frequently visited St. Mary's from his SSPX assignment in Idaho, got a call from a distraught mother after her 15-year-old son received a love letter from an older male teacher at the academy.

Fr. John Rizzo: "One Sunday evening when I arrived, the parents of this particular student came to me and showed me what was truly a love letter ... the male teacher saying, 'Oh, I love your looks, it's great to look upon you when I'm sitting there, or when I'm standing there in the classroom.'"

Rizzo immediately called up Fr. Angles to report the sexual grooming.

Fr. John Rizzo: "Father Angles got on the phone. I read him the contents of the letter. And he expressed shock, he apologized, and I said, 'Please remove this teacher, Father. He should be removed yesterday.' And he said, 'Fr. Rizzo, I will take care of it.'"

But within a few hours, Rizzo was on the receiving end of Angles' venom, receiving a fax from him accusing him of lying and promising to run him out of town.

Fr. John Rizzo: "And it was sent by Fr. Angles and the letter was written in Latin accusing me of lying, and how dare I interrupt his good work at St. Mary's Academy, shame on me type of thing, and I don't like your lies, and furthermore I will have you removed in the near future."

Within six months, Rizzo was removed from his assignment in Idaho.

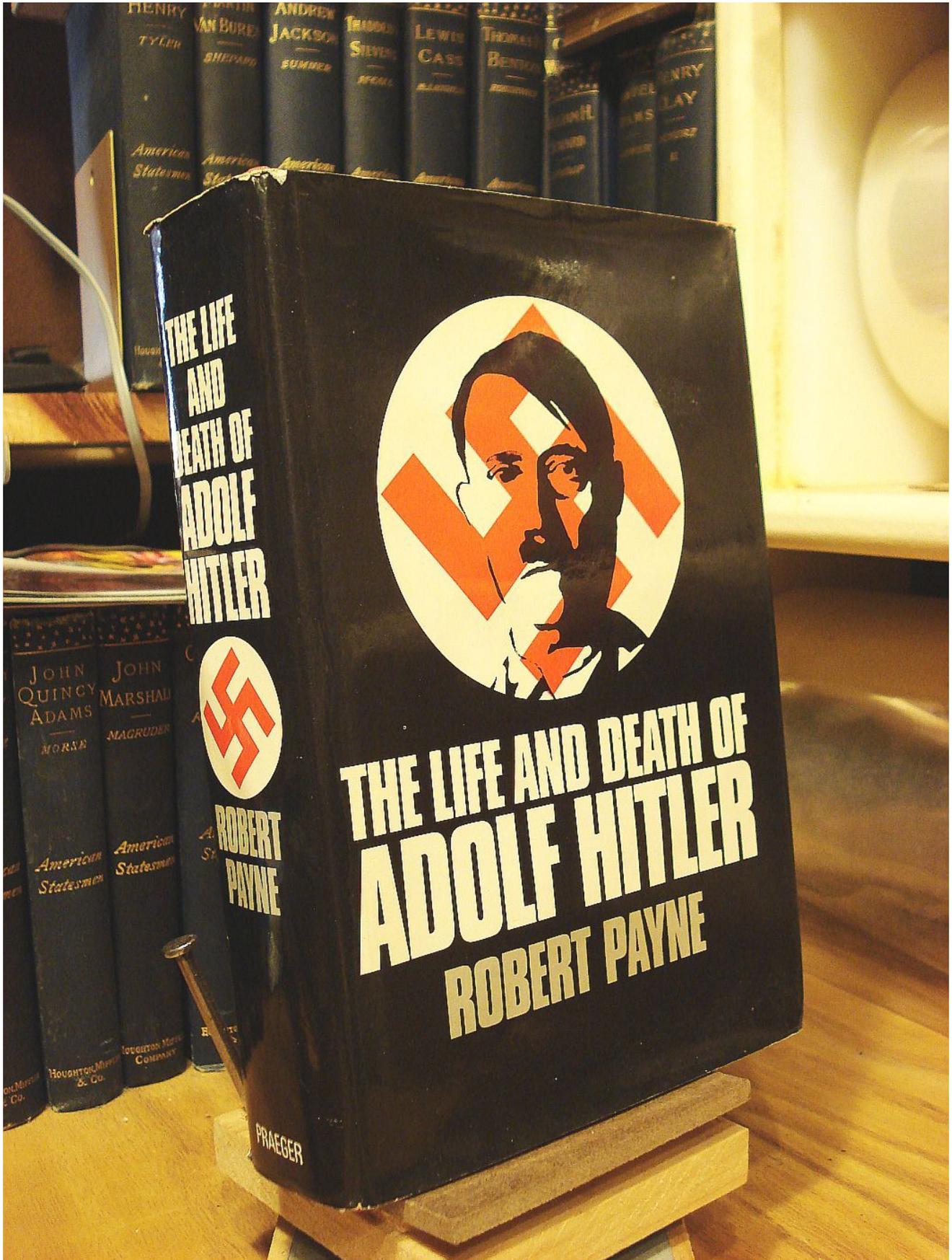
Fr. John Rizzo: "The district superior actually said to me that more or less it was because of the machinations of Fr. Angles."

The corruption and climate of intimidation and cover-up is one of the major reasons Rizzo eventually left the SSPX.

Fr. John Rizzo: "To this day, if I'm not mistaken, that teacher remains a member of the faculty."

Fr. Angles' Fascination With the Nazis

Even more bizarre, Rizzo was eyewitness to Angles' fascination with Adolf Hitler, having special regard for a particular book: *The Life of Adolf Hitler*.



Fr. Angles paraded around his coffee table holding up *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*

Fr. John Rizzo: "And he proceeded to parade around his coffee table making the noise ching ching, ching ching, which would be the noise of a thurible or incensor, striking the chain of the incense, so to speak. So in other words, he got across the idea and that's a gesture that you use in the Mass for the Gospel."

While Angles has in the past denied the allegations, multiple eyewitnesses testify to his fascination with the Nazis, including Mark Gianelloni, Ted Remark and Joseph Souther — all former students at St. Mary's Academy invited to watch the Nazi propaganda film *Triumph of the Will* in Angles' office in May of 1990.

Souther wrote in a 1992 letter: "The fact is he did show *Triumph of the Will* to myself and a friend with me. I also have witnesses who were present when Fr. Angles asked me if I would like to watch it along with having pizza. They have come forward and are prepared to back me up on all of this."

Fr. John Rizzo: "One student said to me that he actually went there to see it, and he felt uncomfortable and he left. He said that priest is a weirdo."

Those same students confirmed they saw Nazi memorabilia in Angles' office, including ceremonial daggers worn by high SS officials, a book written by a Waffen SS colonel with a signed dedication to Fr. Angles and stacks of anti-semitic literature. The priest also boasted of his family's ties to the Nazis.

In spite of all this, Angles was *promoted* to district superior in Ireland, during which time he was also appointed to the high-ranking role of judicial counselor for the SSPX and canonical advisor to then-Superior General Bp. Bernard Fellay.

While in Ireland, Angles was also accused of abusing a boy, afterwards running off to Italy. He's now serving as administrator of the palatial Castel Gabbiano in Lombardy, far from the reach of criminal prosecutors in Ireland or America — under the protection of his SSPX superiors who refuse to hand him over for justice, while his victims live out their shattered lives — those victims who are still living.

Multiple SSPX Clergy Under Criminal Investigation



Saint Mary's, Kansas is the epicenter of the abuse investigation.
Here, Bp. Bernard Fellay confirms 125 Catholics
in Assumption Chapel (smac.edu)

But Angles is only one among multiple SSPX clergy now under a statewide criminal probe for sexual grooming, rape, pederasty and other crimes, with the cover-up reaching to the highest levels of leadership. From St. Mary's Kansas to Eugene Oregon to Post Falls Idaho to Belgium, France, The Philippines and beyond — all around the glob, the SSPX has covered up numerous cases of sex abuse over decades, much of it kept hidden because whistleblowers say they are punished and victims shamed.

But eyewitnesses are now coming forward and cooperating with investigators, who are knocking loudly on the SSPX's doors.

The Society is scrambling, doing damage control, engaged in a charm offensive with supporters and donors, using whatever Catholic social media personalities they can dupe into carrying their water — all while hiding a crisis in its ranks.

The SSPX survives by appealing to largely innocent, tradition-minded Catholics who have a love for the ancient rites of the Church, in contrast to the often outrageous scenes in more modern parishes. All these souls want is a safe spiritual and physical environment for their families, far from the horror of abusive liturgy and sex abuse and lying clergy. They hold their priests in the highest regard, a rank that too many of the clergy and their superiors have taken advantage of.

Many SSPX followers, while perhaps viewing themselves as very different from, even superior to, more modern-minded Catholics do sadly share a very common bond: They are victims, on many different levels.

Saint Mary's, Kansas is home to what will soon be the largest SSPX chapel in the world, and is now the epicenter of the current abuse investigation, whose population is largely made up of SSPX parishioners who own local businesses and hold seats in government, including the police.

The town was the subject of a profile in *The Atlantic* earlier this year. But there was one thing the article did *not* cover.

Jassy Jacas: "There's a huge investigation going on right now for just Kansas incidents. I think as of right now there's at least eight priests that are going to be investigated."

Fr. Pierre Duverger

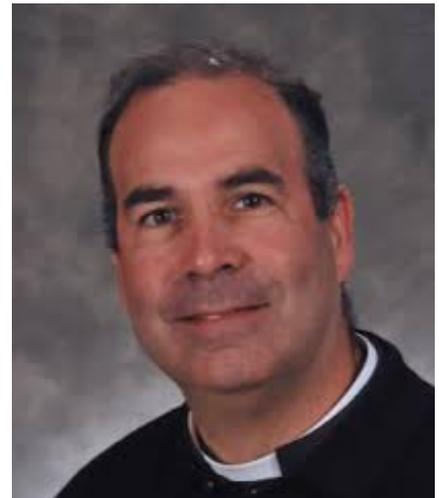
Jassy Jacas was a longtime parishioner at St. Mary's and first met Fr. Pierre Duverger in 2013, a priest who hails from France and whose two brothers also serve as SSPX priests.

In the confessional, Jassy started to cry when she mentioned she'd suffered sex abuse as a child. He interrupted her, pouncing on the chance to be her counselor.

Jassy Jacas: "He really emphasized on the fact that he was my father and I was his daughter, and he also really emphasized on the fact that he had me promise that I was going to text him, call him, email any hour, for anything."

A month later, they had their first face-to-face.

Jassy Jacas: "And he said, 'So are you a virgin?' And I said, 'Yes.' And he said, 'Are you sure?' And I said, 'Yes.' And then he said, 'Can you really be sure?' And I said, 'Father, I don't really know what you're asking me.' And then he said, 'Well, if he put his fingers inside of you, you're not a virgin.' And so I kind of just shut down at that point. And then he said, 'Listen, this is what you need to do. ... I want you to send me an email with everything that you enjoy doing, and then I want you to send me an email in detail of all the sexual abuse that ever happened to you. I want you to include in detail any sexual temptations you have, any sexual thoughts you have or actions you've committed. And I looked at him, and he said, 'This is because you don't understand what sin is and I'm going to help you to understand sin.'"



Fr. Pierre Duverger

Shortly after this troubling encounter, Duverger was reassigned, leaving St. Mary's. But a couple years later, speaking with a lay counselor, Jassy recounted her strange experience with the priest.



Fr. Pierre Duverger (left) leads the Rosary

Jassy Jacas: "And he said, 'Stop right there; this story sounds familiar. I want the name of that priest.' And I said, 'I don't feel comfortable giving that to you.' He said, 'You don't understand; I hear stories all the time. This one matches up.' And I said, 'I'm not going to give it to you; I'm sorry.' And he said, 'Ok, is it Fr. Duverger?'"

Stunned, Jassy was then put in touch with another alleged victim, one whose story has been deemed credible by state authorities and which reportedly involved not only sexual grooming but also sexual assault by Fr. Duverger.

Jassy then went to Fr. Gerard Beck, currently assigned to an SSPX chapel in Idaho, who confirmed that Duverger had been reported for past misconduct.

Jassy Jacas: "He grabs a pen and he starts writing what I say down."

Church Militant: "Did he seem surprised at all?"

Jassy Jacas: "No. He actually said, 'From what I know, Fr. Duverger is actually already under some restrictions due to a certain imprudence with a woman that is nothing near what you just told me' — which now I know they use the word 'imprudence' instead of sexual abuse

all throughout ..."



Fr. Herve de la Tour (center)

Another priest, Fr. Herve de la Tour, formerly assigned to St. Mary's, also told Jassy he came to know of yet another victim in 2007. He never reported Duverger to police, and even counseled Jassy to stay quiet about her own experience. In an email dated November 30, 2019, he wrote, "Since the events took place six years ago, maybe everything should be forgotten now? ... [T]he pain can be offered to God."

Jassy then went to the highest authority in the United States, Fr. Jurgen Wegner, district superior, and questioned him about Duverger.

Jassy Jacas: "And I said, 'Well, did you do an investigation?' And he said, 'No.'"

Even worse, Jassy learned Duverger was serving as principal at St. Thomas More Academy in Sanford, Florida, with unfettered access to boys and girls as well as female staff.

Wegner assured Jassy that he was under strict supervision.

She believed him — until a few weeks later, when she spotted a poster outside church featuring the priest.

Jassy Jacas: "And I see a poster of Fr. Duverger running a pilgrimage, which is more than 50% women."

Church Militant: "With adult women."

Jassy Jacas: "Right. And they do confessions on pilgrimages."

Church Militant: "Were you shocked?"

Jassy Jacas: "Yeah. I knew right then and there the restrictions were not as severe as Fr. Wegner had led me to believe."

Upset by the discovery, Jassy contacted the superior general, Fr. Davide Pagliarani — the highest global authority in the SSPX — who punted, telling her through his secretary in an email dated January 16, 2020, "It is up to the District of the United States to give you an answer."

In the meantime, Fr. Marc Vernoy, pastor of St. Thomas More in Florida, assigned to supervise Duverger, warned Jassy over the phone not to go public with her story.



Fr. Pierre Duverger (L) and Fr. Marc Vernoy

Jassy Jacas: "He says, 'But listen to me. If you go public, you will be ruining so many people's lives. Your name will never be heard the same in any community you ever go to. You could be shutting down schools, losing schools. I said, 'Whoa, whoa, it sounds to me like you're trying to blame me for your guys' choices. I'm not the one putting children at risk here.'"

In a last-ditch effort, Jassy emailed Fr. Wegner and told him either he remove Duverger's access to vulnerable girls or she's going public. He then tells her what she believes to be a lie.

Jassy Jacas: "He emailed me and told me he doesn't have the power to remove Fr. Duverger."



Fr. Jurgen Wegner, U.S. District Superior

Church Militant: "So then who has the power? Because you appealed to the superior general, and he said, 'Well, the decision is Fr. Wegner's,' and Wegner is saying, 'I don't have the power.'"

Jassy Jacas: "Yes."

Fed up with being given the run-around, Jassy went public in a Facebook post on January 19.

Church Militant: "How did people react to your Facebook post?"

Jassy Jacas: "Honestly, about 95% of the people who reached out to me have been supportive. 'Listen, we know things like this have been going on. Good for you.'"

Church Militant: "Other victims also of SSPX priests contacted you."

Jassy Jacas: "Oh yeah, oh yeah, many victims."

Church Militant: "Are you allowed to say how many?"

Jassy Jacas: "I would guesstimate about 20 at least."

Behind-the-Scenes Strategizing by SSPX Leadership

The SSPX was thrown into a panic after Church Militant contacted them with a query about Fr. Duverger.



James Vogel, Communications Director, U.S. District

In their eventual email response, they didn't realize — until it was too late — that they had accidentally included in the email thread a series of behind-the-scenes emails among leadership strategizing about how to respond to Church Militant. Their emails reveal an organization devoted more to protecting the institution than of concern for victims.

Most of the strategizing came from James Vogel, communications director for the U.S. district for the SSPX. He's editor-in-chief of Angelus Press, the official publisher of the SSPX.

In an email dated February 24, 2020, Vogel acknowledges to others in the thread — again unaware that Church Militant would see the email — the ugly history of sex abuse in the SSPX: "We cannot issue a blanket denunciation of the accusers and say he [Duverger] is innocent of everything. Church Militant has already dug into some of our ugly cases in France; what if they find out the history here?"

He goes on to say, "We can admit he's been placed under restrictions, but I still think MOST people will find it bizarre he is allowed to teach/run a school under the circumstances."

After some back and forth with Fr. Wegner, Wegner writes, "Here is it not about mollifying Church Militant. If we go down that road they will judge us as Jassy does. For them, as for Jassy, the only proper outcome would be to have him in a religious prison."



Fr. Davide Pagliarani, Superior General

Making clear their concern is to stem further inquiry, he goes on to ask, "But what is the right middle between saying pretty much nothing and soothing them?"

Vogel responds, "It is an interesting strategy, but it is a kind of deflection ... which might not be bad as an interim decision! ... Whatever we say or decide: They will respond. ... It will not end with Fr. Duverger; Jassy's claims and contacts will be a veritable 'gold mine' for them."

After all this behind-the-scenes strategizing, the SSPX chose the way of silence, issuing Church Militant a curt response, Fr. Wegner claiming he could not discuss the matter and instead referring us to SSPX attorneys. When Church Militant contacted the attorneys, they also refused to talk.

So in the end, no questions answered, no transparency, total silence.

But SSPX leadership had good reason to be concerned about the discovery of what they termed "a veritable gold mine" and it "not ending" with Fr. Duverger. It turns out the leadership has a deep history of covering for predators, failing to report crimes to civil authorities, attacking witnesses and trying to silence victims. A gold mine indeed.

The SSPX was founded in 1970 by Abp. Marcel Lefebvre, a Holy Ghost Father who desired to form clergy devoted to offering the traditional liturgy.

In 1988, Lefebvre defied the Holy See by illicitly consecrating four bishops, leading to their automatic excommunication — which would only be lifted from the four bishops decades later by Pope Benedict in 2009. Lefebvre, however, died excommunicated — and remains so.

A letter from the pontiff that same year clarified that "the Society has no canonical status in the Church, and its ministers ... do not legitimately exercise any ministry in the Church." A Vatican commission clarified that they're "suspended *a divinis*, that is, prohibited by the Church from exercising their orders because of their illicit ordination," meaning they are not permitted to offer Mass, and each time they do is an act of disobedience.

In spite of recent indulgences from Pope Francis granting the ability to hear confessions or conduct marriages, purely for the good of the faithful, the status of the Society has never been formally changed by the Holy See. The SSPX also rejected the pope's offer to be granted a personal prelature, a form of governance that would've brought the society into full communion with the Church.

Through the years the cult of the SSPX has grown, now with 600 priests worldwide, three bishops, six seminaries, houses in 62 countries spread across six continents, with a flock of more than one million souls.

The SSPX has often pitted itself against what it calls the Novus Ordo Church, meaning the New Rite of the Mass offered in the vast majority of parishes today, a number of its supporters touting that the society has been free of the stain of sex abuse that's wracked the rest of the Church.

Some, however, have noticed the curious silence of the Society's leaders on this score, and even when they did speak out — as they did in [a 2018 article](#) — supporters were puzzled by what appeared to be the Society's downplaying of abuse.

In a write-up published by SSPX-friendly publication The Remnant titled "[SSPX Addresses Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report](#)," they wondered why the Society appeared to be brushing off abuse: "Why then does the Society report close with what appears to be an attempt to minimize the clerical abuse crisis in the Novus Ordo?" the article going on to say "as someone who's attended SSPX chapels for many years, I'm trying to understand why the Society is taking this course of action"

A closer look at the SSPX makes clear why: because the Society has been at the exact same game for decades, but in this case, because of how the leadership presents itself, it strikes many as even more egregious.

Fr. Douglas Laudenschlager

In fact, the very first American priest to be ordained by Abp. Lefebvre, Fr. Douglas Laudenschlager in 1980, once a bright star in the SSPX constellation, had a trail of abuse allegations — from before his ordination till years after.



Douglas Laudenschlager, the first U.S. priest to be ordained by Abp. Marcel Lefebvre, left the SSPX under a cloud of scandal involving multiple alleged male victims

When Laudenschlager was a deacon in the 1970s, he taught at the SSPX seminary in Connecticut, but was sent packing after a seminarian accused him of sexually propositioning him.

Fr. John Rizzo: "Douglas Laudenschlager is his name, and so he had a history, and some of that history was also in the seminary, because he taught in the seminary, at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Connecticut at the time."

A seminarian confided to Fr. Rizzo, who was a fellow student at the time, that Laudeschlager had approached him asking for sexual favors.

Fr. John Rizzo: "He spoke to me about it, and he reported that incident to the rector. To the rector's credit, Douglas was removed from the seminary that night."

It's thus remarkable that not only did Laudenschlager go on to be ordained in the SSPX, Lefebvre was so enamored of the young priest he personally traveled to the United States to ordain him. That priest would go on, according to one witness, to abuse boys at the SSPX academy in Idaho.

Fr. John Rizzo: "I was a friend of one particular family whose son was victimized, so they came to me one day with that particular issue at hand. ... I believe the student did receive counseling at the time, and I think they did address it to the Society of St. Pius X, and at that point I believe they said, 'Well, he's no longer with us.'"

Church Militant tracked down Laudenschlager, who lives in Seattle with his longtime gay partner.

Church Militant: "Hello. Is this Douglas Laudenschlager?"

Douglas Laudenschlager: "Yes, it is."

Church Militant: "My name is Christine Niles; I'm an investigative reporter. I was just doing a little bit of research for my current report into a priestly society, and your name came up. I just want to confirm with you: Were you once a priest of the SSPX?"

Douglas Laudenschlager: "Uh, I'd prefer not to talk about that. Thank you, Christine."

His case raises a number of serious questions.

How could a Society so dedicated to traditional Catholic teaching let a predatory homosexual slip through the cracks — even while allegations were raised prior to his ordination?

What exactly did the Society see in him that it viewed as "star" material?

How could the very founder of the Society itself suspect nothing when he was so suspicious of everything else, and travel to the United States personally to ordain him?

Why did it not remove him immediately when it became clear who they were dealing with?

And why did they not alert civil authorities about his abuse?

He's never been called to account for his crimes, meaning there has been no justice for his victims, because the SSPX never reported him to police. That refusal to report sexual predators to authorities is standard operating procedure for the SSPX.

Peter Palmeri — and Silence From the SSPX



Peter Palmeri, arrested and charged with multiple counts of rape and child sex charges involving his own children. Palmeri was a longtime parishioner and employee at St. Mary's Academy.

In St. Mary's, Kansas, for example, just this year, two SSPX parishioners — Dean Johnson and Peter Palmeri — have been jailed for serious sex crimes against children, the latter a father who raped his own children — while three SSPX priests who had certain knowledge of his deeds refused to report him to authorities.

Palmeri was arrested and charged last year on multiple counts of rape and child sex assault. He's now in prison. He's father to a large family that are longtime parishioners of the local SSPX chapel and worked at St. Mary's Academy.

According to one eyewitness, not one, not two, but three SSPX priests knew of his abuse and said nothing, even ordering him to stay quiet.

Kyle White: "He said not to turn Palmeri in and that if I was to speak about it I'd be committing a mortal sin for ruining his good name."

Church Militant: "So he said if you reported Peter Palmeri you'd be committing a mortal sin?"

Kyle White: "Correct. Correct."

In 2012, Kyle White was engaged to one of Palmeri's daughters, who'd been sexually abused by Palmeri from the time she was 8 to age 15. Both Kyle and she were parishioners at St. Mary's.

At age 19, she and Kyle went to SSPX priest Fr. Todd Angele, at the time assigned at St. Mary's, to ask for his advice on how to handle this.



Fr. Todd Angele

Kyle White: "We went to go talk to Fr. Todd Angele and I was hoping that he would advise her to turn her father in, Peter Palmeri, and he did not."

Noteworthy, Angele grew up going to St. Mary's Academy with Palmeri, the two longtime friends.

Kyle White: "Palmeri was an employee of St Mary's Academy there at St. Mary's at the time, and he stayed an employee for quite a few weeks after our first conversation with Fr. Angele."

Church Militant: "So then it wasn't Fr. Angele who was responsible for removing Palmeri?"

Kyle White: "Exactly. No. It was not Fr. Angele, to my understanding."

Kyle ignored Angele's advice to stay quiet, leading to a surprise phone call a few weeks later from Fr. Herve de la Tour — the same priest who counseled Jassy Jacas to stay quiet about Fr. Duverger.

Kyle White: "Father de la Tour told me to not speak about Peter Palmeri and ruin his good name; I'd be committing the sin of detraction."

Kyle then turned to Fr. Kenneth Novak, who met him under cover of night in the choir loft of Assumption Chapel.

Kyle White: "Father Novak said that he was not supposed to be talking to me. He agreed that Peter Palmeri needed to be turned in because how pedophiles work, they don't stop, and he was told not to speak with me."

After all three SSPX clergy refused to offer assistance, Kyle took his report to the SSPX-friendly police anyway, who failed to launch an investigation, claiming the matter was hearsay.

It wouldn't be until six years later that the sheriff's department admitted the police department had bungled the case, Palmeri finally arrested and charged for his crimes. He's currently behind bars.

Church Militant reached out to Fr. Angele, who's now in Michigan, to ask why he counseled Kyle not to report Palmeri to police. Instead of a direct response, Communications Director James Vogel answered, invoking the priest-penitent privilege to prevent Angele from responding.

But the priest-penitent privilege only applies to matters spoken in confession. Angele's advice was not given in confession and therefore not protected by Church law. We never heard from Fr. Angele.

Church Militant contacted Father Kenneth Novak, who also failed to respond.

Fr. Kenneth Novak

Novak is currently the subject of an assault charge lodged against him by a parishioner who claims the priest roughed up his son.

And multiple individuals have spoken with Church Militant accusing Fr. Novak of breaking up marriages and families, using his spiritual authority to seduce women away from their husbands and convince them to file for divorce and take their children to St. Mary's, where

Fr. Novak freely visits them at all hours of the day and night.

One anguished man fighting to save his marriage told Church Militant Novak convinced his wife to leave him and take the children with her. Meanwhile his children inform him the priest comes over to the house to visit — sometimes late at night — where he trashes the father in front of the children.

A similar account was echoed by another man who spoke with Church Militant also fighting to be re-united with his family, his wife also reportedly seduced by Novak, taking the children away and convinced by the priest to file for divorce.

And a distraught grandmother told Church Militant she'd been cut off from her grandchildren after they came under Novak's influence.

All of them have asked to remain anonymous to protect their families, whom they continue to fight for.



Image caption

SSPX leadership is aware of the complaints but have largely done nothing, permitting Novak to freely minister at St. Mary's.

James Simmerman

And in Eugene, Oregon, Kenneth Novak's brother Lawrence — another SSPX priest — went to bat for a convicted sexual predator, actually writing a character reference for him, a man who eventually did four years of hard time for sexually abusing two adolescent girls.

In the May 10, 2007 letter, Lawrence Novak praised James Simmerman — a local millionaire and SSPX donor — as "a very generous person," saying "he is a gentleman," signing off by saying, "He has been very kind, generous and useful to me. I consider myself honored to have known him."

The abuse he committed was outlined in a 14-count indictment. It showed the abuse of the minor girls occurred at the SSPX-run St. Thomas Becket Academy, and occurred not just on school property, but also during school hours, Simmerman even placing a sleeping bag in a room next to the church bell tower where he would assault one of the girls.

Simmerman had free reign at the school and church, unquestioned access, owing to his \$700,000 donation and close association with various SSPX priests he would take on frequent trips to his vacation home in Alaska. Shockingly, though, when the abuse had been reported years earlier to the SSPX priest in charge of St. Thomas at the time, Fr. Daniel Cooper, he disregarded it and did not report it to police.

When the case eventually went to trial in 2007, both SSPX clergy and the supporters rallied around the sexual predator — while shaming the victims.

Like Fr. Novak, SSPX priest Fr. Pablo Arzuago also wrote a letter to the court vouching for Simmerman's character. Writing all the way from France, Arzuaga pleads with the court to show the sexual predator mercy, calling his multiple crimes of repeated sexual molestation a "mistake": "This is a man who has never done anything wrong before and possesses many good qualities. He made a terrible mistake."

Parishioners also wrote to the court begging for clemency, while attacking the victims as provoking the abuse.

In a May 2, 2007 letter, Eric Braunger claims he saw the victim "make herself available and provoke this situation. James, in my belief, was targeted by this young lady."



James Simmerman

And Simmerman's son, Michael Bryant, wrote in a May 29, 2007 letter about the victim: "I have heard the [victims' parents] are severe in the judgment of my dad while never considering the aggressive behavior of their daughter."

In addition to Simmerman's criminal conviction, he also settled a \$3 million lawsuit with the victims' families.

6. If this man is truly repentant, which I hope and pray that he is, is it right to put temptation in the way of the weak? Who would bring an alcoholic a drink, and tell him "don't drink it"?
7. Are we not concerned with the liability to which we are exposed? If, God forbid, this man should ever offend again, what would be the response to the victim and family? An apology? Would said victim not be justified in suing for all they could?
8. Does the SSPX really want to be known as sympathetic to perverts of this nature? Couldn't this type of policy be seen as a magnet to other predators? Hasn't the SSPX received enough bad press? Can we not learn from the scandals of the rest of the Church?
9. Why does it seem as though we are filled with false compassion? It appears that we are giving more consideration to the transgressor than those who are injured.

After the SSPX priest welcomed the convicted abuser back into the parish, one outraged Catholic wrote a letter to Bp. Fellay asking if the Society wants to be known as "sympathetic to perverts of this nature."

Fast forward nearly a decade, and imagine parishioners' shock when they saw Simmerman sitting in the pews on a Sunday morning in 2016, after being released from prison.

One parishioner was so outraged he wrote an email on February 25, 2016 to Bp. Fellay in Menzingen, Switzerland:

On this last Sunday, Feb. 21, my family arrived at Mass to find a convicted child molester, James Simmerman, seated in church, with his wife and his stepson's family. He was within arms reach of several young girls. I was immediately filled with a range of emotions: disgust, horror, anger, shock, et al. This is a man who violated and stole the innocence of young girls in our parish (at times in the church building itself!), destroyed families, and tore a rift in this parish

He went on to ask, "What shepherd brings a sheep-killing wolf into his flock, especially with no warning or notification?"

And later in the letter: "Does the SSPX really want to be known as sympathetic to perverts of this nature? Couldn't this type of policy be seen as a magnet to other predators?"

Bishop Fellay replied within eight hours in a brief note saying the matter was in the hands of the U.S. district superior, Fr. Wegner. Wegner agreed to a public meeting with parishioners, which took place more than two weeks later.

At the meeting, which Wegner flew in especially for, he blasted and shamed parishioners for what he called their lack of charity toward Simmerman.

Church Militant spoke with eyewitnesses who had attended the meeting, some so disgusted they left the parish and quit the SSPX altogether.

Simmerman remains a registered sex offender in the state of Alaska, and sources say he continues to donate to the SSPX.

But this is only the tip of the iceberg.

Fr. Philippe Peignot

Father Philippe Peignot was found guilty several years ago by an SSPX tribunal of abusing an 11-year-old boy in France, making him sit on his lap as he fondled his genitals.

According to a 2017 exposé in Swedish media, after the boy reported the abuse, the SSPX sat on the information for a year, before then-Superior General Fr. Franz Schmidberger transferred Peignot to a new congregation, never reporting him to police.

Peignot would later be put in charge of a scout camp, in spite of multiple victims known to the SSPX. In fact, it was none other than Bp. Bernard Fellay himself who lifted the ban on Peignot, allowing him once again to be around children.

It was only after the boy — now a grown man — wrote to the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith that decisive action was taken, the Vatican asking in a letter sent in 2013 that the SSPX open a canonical trial against Peignot, where he was found guilty.

In 2016 a Swedish media crew found the priest in a chapel in the town of Espiet, near Bordeaux. He was surrounded by children.

The priest's devoted following of SSPX supporters, who are oftentimes accused of cult-like worship of the Society, slashed the tires of the media crew's vehicle.



Fr. Philippe Peignot

Fr. Christophe Roisnel



Fr. Christophe Roisnel

Then there's Fr. Christophe Roisnel, sentenced to 19 years in prison for rape and torture of three women who had been teachers at the SSPX school that Roisnel ran, Notre-Dame de la Sablonnière in Goussonville, near Paris.

The victims accused him of sexually assaulting them during exorcisms, and an SSPX tribunal found Roisnel guilty of rape.

Instead of reporting him to police, the rapist was hidden away in a Capuchin monastery in Burgundy, where he was ordered to do just two years of prayer and penance, at which point he might be reconsidered for ministry.

All of this was done, according to French media reports, with the knowledge and approval of Bp. Bernard Fellay. It was at this monastery in 2014 where police found Roisnel and arrested him.

His sentence was increased from 17 to 19 years after a court found him guilty of torture in addition to rape, using scissors, knitting needles and broomsticks to assault one of his victims — a man the SSPX, with Fellay's knowledge and consent, would have turned loose.

Kevin Sloniker

And in 2016 Kevin Sloniker was given life behind bars after he pleaded guilty to abusing seven boys aged 8 to 14 over the span of 10 years at the SSPX academy in Post Falls, Idaho.



Kevin Sloniker

Sloniker had been kicked out of the SSPX seminary in 2005 after leadership found him mentally unstable for trying to circumcise himself. But that wasn't disturbing enough, apparently, for the SSPX to keep him away from children.

The priests allowed him to actually stay on as youth camp counselor at Immaculate Conception Church, where he'd take boys on trips across state lines and abuse them.

One young victim even informed the SSPX he'd been stripped naked and whipped by Sloniker, but leadership, while claiming to have removed him in 2006, failed to restrict his access, a local police investigation showing Sloniker was able to contact children through the SSPX school as recently as 2013.

He's currently serving a life sentence at Idaho Correctional Institution.

Fr. Uribe Silviano Bernabe

In Bordeaux in southwest France, SSPX priest Fr. Uribe Silviano Bernabe was sentenced in criminal court for sexually assaulting a 13-year-old girl as well as an adult woman.

Bernabe was ordained in 1989, and was headmaster of a school in Bordeaux. He took his case to France's highest court of appeal, which upheld his conviction. He's now behind bars for his crimes.

Fr. Frédéric Abbet

And in Brussels, Belgium in 2017, in another case directly touching on Bp. Fellay, Fr. Frédéric Abbet was sentenced to five years in prison for homosexual abuse of boys in an SSPX boarding school.



Notre Dame de L'Esperance, the Brussels school where Fr. Frédéric Abbet allegedly sexually abused three boys by sneaking into their dorms through a corridor connecting the priory to the school.

It was Fellay personally who had assigned Abbet to the school, where he lived in a priory next door to the school — under the supervision of then-Brussels district superior Jurgen Wegner.

In fact, a 2006 letter from Wegner rejoices over the fact that Abbet has joined his priory: "The priest community has also grown as the fourth priest we have been waiting for a long time has joined us. It is Father Frédéric Abbet. Our patience has been rewarded!"

It was during Wegner's time there that Abbet carried on his abuse of boys, his room next to a corridor giving him direct access to the boys dorm, where he would sneak to at night and force oral sex and other abuse on them.

But note: This came *after* prior abuse allegations in his native Switzerland, where he was accused of abusing a boy at the San Jose camp run by the SSPX in Valais. According to sources, the SSPX assured the victim's parents he'd never have access to children again, set up a tribunal to try the case, and acquitted him of abuse based on lack of evidence.

When new abuse allegations arose in Brussels, Bp. Fellay again stepped in personally to intervene on Abbet's behalf, sending his private secretary, Fr. Raphael Granges, to accompany the accused priest to the courthouse daily. Granges was an attorney, and dressed up in lay clothes to avoid being recognized.

Fr. Stephen Abraham

Father Stephen Abraham, ordained to the SSPX in the 1990s, was accused of homosexual abuse of a young man in the Philippines, and again 10 years later, where he allegedly abused a 14-year-old boy.

According to a priestly source, when the first allegation was made known to Bp. Fellay, Fellay again was slow to act.

It wasn't until the abuse incident in France that Abraham was sent to live in seclusion in England, where he was still allowed to wear his cassock and present himself as a priest.

Kurt Chione: "But see, the way the people are fooled is people say, 'Well, that was a Novus Ordo problem. Our priests say the Latin Mass, so that couldn't possibly be true. And they know they have the people in that mindset.'"

The SSP, led by Bp. Bernard Fellay during so much of this cover-up, which also involved his predecessor as well as his successor, claims on its site that it is "committed to protecting all minors and vulnerable adults."

Its track record, however, presents a glaringly different story, indicating frightening and horrific abuse, and cover-up reaching to the highest levels, all under the guise of piety and a reverent liturgy that continues to draw well-meaning Catholics yearning for tradition.

There are in fact two threads of "tradition" in the SSPX: the liturgy, but also the dark world of sex abuse and cover-up.

Despite its claims to be so different and superior to the rest of the Catholic Church, actually, it isn't that different at all. In some ways, in fact, because of its claim to superiority, it's able to get away with even more, given the near-fanatical support of so many supporters.

There are many more criminal clergy than the ones we've covered, but law enforcement has asked us to not report on them yet so as not to compromise their criminal investigations.

All throughout our research Church Militant was faced with repeated stonewalling from SSPX leadership, either given outrageous reasons why they would not answer our questions, or choosing to say nothing at all.

Meanwhile, Church Militant has learned that Fr. Wegner, district superior — the man in America behind so much of the cover-up — is transferring to a post in Austria this fall, far from the reach of criminal prosecutors — all with the blessing and knowledge of SSPX leaders.





Fr. Stephen Abraham