

Most notorious Catholic priests in Philippine history

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"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves..." - Matthew 7:15

The Philippines, just like every other country, has its own share of skeletons in the closet. Oftentimes, those skeletons choose to appear at the most inopportune times, though there are times when the country takes the time to learn from the misdemeanors of the past.

For a long time, the church has hedged about punishing the misconducts of the Catholic order. However, if the Bible - the cornerstone of every moral dimension of the society - can be tagged as the 'laundry list' for the worst crimes humanity can commit, how are we to expect the priests not to practice what they preach?

Here is a rundown of some of the Catholic church leaders' deepest, darkest practices - most of which were left unpunished:

1. The molester

One of the molesters came in the robed form of the late Fr. Mark Falvey S.J. of Ateneo de Davao University. This Jesuit priest is the one recently identified by President Rodrigo Duterte as his alleged molester in high school. While Fr. Falvey was never charged during his lifetime, the Jesuit order had to posthumously pay \$16-M to settle yet another claim - that of four girls and five boys who were sexually molested between 1959 and 1975 at the Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church in Los Angeles.

Fr. Agustin Cuenca, OFM, a Franciscan parish priest from Our

Lady of the Abandoned Church in Sta. Ana, Manila was accused and charged in August 1990 for two-year abuse of two of his acolytes - aged 15 and 16. While this didn't remain a secret, the criminal case was dropped because the law against acts of lasciviousness applied only to boys under age 12. The sad part is, Cuenca remains in active ministry. As of 2006, he was the director of the Franciscan Missionary Union and was listed as the house bursar of St. Gregory the Great Friary in Quezon City.

2. The serial killer

Surprised? That's right, there was a killer priest. But alas, the surprise doesn't end there. Fr. Juan Severino Mallari of Magalang, Pampanga is the stuff of horror stories.

His welcome in Magalang had marked the beginning of a series of unexplained murders amounting to a total of 57 people over a period of ten years. His undoing was not divulged, but in his defense, Fr. Mallari claimed that he had murdered his parishioners *"because he believed that he could by this means save his mother who, he persuaded himself, had been bewitched."*

The horror story that is Fr. Mallari's life ended in 1840 when he was executed by hanging - 14 years after languishing in prison - making him the Philippines' first documented serial killer as well as the first priest executed by the Spanish colonial government.

3. The home-wrecker

The very first case of adultery filed against a Catholic priest stars Fr. Jeffrey Louie Maghirang of the Archdiocese of Pampanga and his cam-to-cam fun with a married woman.

The fuming husband, a security manager for a chain of malls, approached Auxiliary Bishop Pablo Virgilio David and showed him a message from Fr. Maghirang which goes, *"Sige na*

babes, sleep na tayo, gagawa pa ko ng homily." (Let's sleep babes, I still have to make my homily.)

The charges were dropped, however, as the complainant allegedly failed to establish (1) that the Skype account that supposedly recorded the conversation between Maghirang and the woman belonged to the priest; (2) the evidence for sexual intercourse, and (3) the jurisdiction - the place where the sexual act was done.

The star of this real-life kabitserye, Fr. Jeffrey Louie Maghirang, is currently "on loan" to the Cathedral of the Blessed Virgin Mary, officiating Catholic marriages in New Zealand.

4. The drug supplier

This monsignor from Cebu has a list of misdemeanors that would rival the raunchiest of teenagers. Msgr. Cristobal Garcia allegedly started his long list with a molestation of his own 15-year-old brother. This same brother has later written to the L.A.'s Vicar for clergy when Garcia founded a monastic religious society for boys and young men, the Society of the Angel of Peace (SAP) in 1992.

In his letter, Msgr. Garcia's brother had said:

In addition the allegation from his own brother, Garcia had been accused of giving cocaine to minors in Los Angeles and sexually abusing them. Fr. Vincent Serpa of the St. Dominic's Church in the Eagle Rock neighborhood of Los Angeles has received the report of abuse, and in an effort to find evidence to support the claim, has found a 17-year-old boy in Garcia's bed instead.

The Dominican order, to which Msgr. Garcia was originally ordained, granted him "indult exclaustation" which allowed him to transfer out of the order to a diocese if he finds a "benevolent bishop". He found his "benevolent bishop" in Cebu archbishop Cardinal Ricardo Vidal, who, despite warnings from US church

officials, accepted Garcia and promoted him to monsignor in 1997.

Monsignor Cris Garcia prominence as a priest in Cebu ended when he got suspended in June 2012 after reactions to a National Geographic report on his famous ivory collection. Cebu archbishop Palma has announced the suspension, citing a Vatican investigation of sexual abuse by the priest as the reason.

5. The rapists

Several priests from the different diocese in the Philippines seems to have forgotten to heed the Catholic church's call to celibacy.

Rev. Raul Cabonce of the Butuan diocese has been accused and charged with rape, acts of lasciviousness, and child abuse by a 17-year-old girl from an impoverished family in Poblacion, Tubay, Agusan del Norte. The girl, in exchange for her housekeeping services - which apparently include extra services, has also allegedly been offered a scholarship and several threats. Despite petitions from Gabriela, a women's rights group, Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos keeps Cabonce in his 'bishop's palace, announcing instead that a committee has been created to investigate the allegations.

Rev. Gabriel Madangeng, Jr. of the Bontoc-Lagawe apostolic vicariate has been accused of raping three girls in 2007 and 2008. Two of the three rape victims filed complaints - with one girl saying that she was 14 when Madangeng had bound her arms and legs to a bed and sexually assaulted her at the Lay Formation Center in the town of Natonin in Mountain Province, while the other one claimed to have been 15 when she was raped "many times" at St. Rita Parish Convent in Bontoc. While his supervising bishop, Bishop Rodolfo Beltran, claims to have suspended the priest when the first case was filed, conflicting information regarding Madangeng's whereabouts has appeared online. A GMA News article dated 2013 says Madangeng was re-assigned to

another parish after 2009, while an undated online directory - that once appeared on Union of Catholic Asian (UCA) News - listed Madangeng "on leave."

From the North hails another alleged rapist - Fr. Macario Apuya of the Society of Divine Word (SVD) of the Saint Therese Parish in the city of Dagupan. The priest has had two criminal charges - one of rape and one of child abuse - of a 14-year-old girl. Reports say that after three years in jail, Apuya was acquitted by Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC). The judge, Abednego Adre, had ruled in favor of the priest saying that:

Fr. Macario "Macky" Apuya died on October 20, 2013, of liver and kidney complications.

6. The gangbang priests

As if the above-mentioned misdemeanors are not enough, several Filipino priests have decidedly partaken into what can only be called a gangbang.

The story of the gangbang priests started with a sixteen-year-old devout Catholic from California named Rita Milla. With the priestly charm of one Fr. Santiago (Henry) Tamayo, he was able to make sexual advances towards the young penitent, eventually convincing her to have sexual intercourse with him two years later. Fr. Tamayo must have taken the bible verse from Hebrews 13:16 (Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.) to heart, as he also introduced and shared the young Milla to six more priests - Fathers Angel Cruces, Henry Caboang, Rubin Abaya, Sylvio Lacar, Victor Balbin and Valentine Tugade - who also sexually abused her.

As Rita Milla was impregnated, Fr. Tamayo recommended abortion (to which the girl refused) eventually arranging for her to go to the Philippines under the pretense of studying. When the

cover story blew up - the real story emerged as Rita Milla sued the priests. After filing the case, a paternity test in 2003 proved that Tugade has sired Milla's child. Milla received \$500,000 settlement from America's largest archdiocese.

The erring 7 priests have since been reassigned and have all vanished like bubbles though a Rev. Ruben V. Abaya, JCD has been found listed in an online Catholic directory as Defender of the Bond of the Laoag diocese and as chaplain for Monasterio de Santa Clara, a convent in Laoag City, province of Ilocos Norte.

Fr. Santiago Tamayo, on the other hand, issued a public apology in 1991. In his statement, he said, *"I had to go public and tell the whole truth. I knew that a cheap absolution would not undo the evil of the past."* Tamayo died on January 22, 1996.

While the real goings-on inside the walls of the Catholic chambers remains a mystery, one thing is for sure, the Catholic church refuse to wash their linens in public.

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