

MURDER CASE STUDY
VICTIM: REV. ALFRED J. KUNZ



MURDERED MARCH 3-4, 1998
MURDERER: UNKNOWN



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The Rev. Alfred J. Kunz, from a Swiss and German background, was born in Dodgeville in rural Wisconsin in 1930. He grew up in Fennimore and his family owned a nearby cheese factory. He attended seminary at Pontifical College Josephinum in Ohio and received a doctorate in canon law. After assisting in parishes in Waunakee, Cassville, and Monroe, he became pastor of the tiny St. Michael's Church (149 families) in Dane, Wisconsin, in 1967 and remained there for thirty-one years before his death at age 67. He kept the tiny parish going. After the church burned he rebuilt it. He held fish fries to support the tiny school. He took no salary, drove an ancient car, and owned almost nothing.¹ He ran a one-man show; he kept no records of parish membership, he had no daily planner, and rarely kept notes on counseling sessions.²

As a canon lawyer, Kunz served as Judicial Vicar and worked on the Marriage Tribunal in the Madison diocese under Bishop Cletus O'Donnell. Kunz's expertise in canon law also enabled him to continue the traditional practices he liked while still remaining a priest in good standing. He advised other conservative Catholics on canon law matters. He said a "traditional" Latin Mass at 8 a.m. three times a week for the school children, and his Sunday Latin mass attracted people from great distances. He had a radio show. He and the Rev. Charles Fiore taped a show on the Eucharist in Madison on March 3. Fiore dropped him off at the school, where Kunz had a small apartment, about 10 p.m. Someone spoke to Kunz on the phone about 10:30 p.m.

Somewhere between then and the early hours of the next morning Kunz and an assailant fought, and the assailant cut Kunz's throat. Kunz bled to death, lying at the foot of a statue of St. Michael the Archangel. A teacher at the parish school, a graduate of the conservative Magdalen College, found his body at 7 a.m. on March 4, 1998.

Because Kunz had some unusual interests and contacts, both ordinary and extraordinary motives have been ascribed to the murderer.

A drifter was ruled out: Dane is too far off the beaten track, and the mode of the killing evidenced deep personal animosity. Burglary and robbery were also ruled out.

In March 2000 police claimed that Kunz had "intimate" relationships with females and that jealousy may have been a motive for the murder.³ The Rev. Lawrence Brey was recovering from quadruple by-pass surgery and lived with Kunz for six months before Kunz's death. Brey saw nothing suspect in Kunz's relationships with women, and Kunz was 67 years old.⁴

Then there are the unusual theories.

Kunz performed exorcisms and in fact was scheduled to consult about one with a woman who was on her way to see he when he was murdered.⁵ Some therefore suspect that Luciferians, people who worship Satan in a direct and sincere manner, may have murdered Kunz. Kunz was

¹ Jim Stingl, "Uncompromising Priest Held Fast to Tradition," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, March 8, 1998.

² Peter Maller, "Slain Priest Continues to Stir Emotions," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, February 28, 1999.

³ Jason Shepherd, "'Intimate' Affairs of Kunz Probed," *Capital Times*, March 3, 2000.

⁴ Rob Zaleski, "Is the Killer's Trail Cold?" *Capital Times*, July 3, 2000.

⁵ Chuck Nowlen, "The Devil and Father Kunz," *Las Vegas Weekly*, April 12, 2001.

a friend of Malachi Martin, a dubious figure, an ex-Jesuit whose status in the Church was never clear. Martin wrote novels about a Satanic conspiracy in the Catholic Church, even at the highest levels, and saw the hands of a Luciferian in the manner of Kunz's death.⁶

Kunz attracted right-wing Catholics, some of whom were involved in bizarre groups. The least bizarre were those who thought the popes were betraying God by not properly consecrating Russia to the Virgin Mary as she had requested. Other groups took an apocalyptic and survivalist direction.⁷

Kunz was also involved with people who were exposing sexual corruption in the Catholic Church: Rev. Charles Fiore and Stephen Brady of Roman Catholic Faithful.

Fiore and Kunz were friends. Fiore, who had been a Dominican, disagreed with the direction the order was taking, left, and eventually became a member of the Fraternity of St. Peter, a traditionalist order that said the old Latin Mass. Fiore lived in Lodi, about five miles from Dane. He saw Kunz several times a week and spoke on the phone with him daily. Kunz was Fiore's confessor.⁸ They collaborated on the radio program.

Fiore said that he discovered sexual abuse at his first assignment and was deeply disturbed by the way it was covered up by the hierarchy. Over the years he assisted about a hundred victims of sexual abuse. With aid from Kunz, Fiore prepared a dossier on the problems of the Catholic Church in the United States and had it delivered to the pope by a friend of Msgr. Dziwisz, the secretary of Pope John Paul. The pope ignored the dossier.⁹ As a similar dossier (prepared by another Dominican and canon lawyer, the Rev. Thomas Doyle) was delivered to the Pope by Cardinal Krol of Detroit and was also ignored, and the Pope ignored the pleas of a cardinal to act against pedophilia, Fiore's story is entirely credible. Fiore claimed he knew of six bishops who were pedophiles;¹⁰ this statement was regarded as bizarre, but as of 2008 nineteen American bishops have been accused, and some have admitted to the abuse.¹¹ Fiore's most controversial work was with Stephen Cook, who accused Cardinal Bernardin of Chicago of abuse and later said that he could no longer trust his memory of the abuse because of the way his brain was affected by AIDS.¹²

Kunz helped Stephen Brady found Roman Catholic Faithful, a group dedicated to investigating and exposing corruption in the Roman Catholic Church, and provided Brady with information about sexually active and abusive priests in the Midwest.¹³ Brady has made what were at one

⁶ Malachi Martin, "The Assassination of Christ's Hero," *Father Martin's Monthly Newsletter*, March 12, 1998.

⁷ Jessica McBride and Jim Stingl, "A Wayward Flock, An Unsolved Killing," *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, May 24, 1998.

⁸ Samara Kalk, "Friend of Kunz Cries Foul," *Capital Times*, March 3, 2000.

⁹ Toby Westerman, "Gay Culture in Catholic Church Grows," *World Net Daily*, March 24, 2002.

¹⁰ William R. Wineke, "Rev. Fiore, Abortion Opponent, Dies at 68," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 20, 2003.

¹¹ See <http://www.bishop-accountability.org/bishops/accused/>.

¹² "Maverick Priest Aided Bernardin's Accuser," *Christian Century*, December 15, 1993; Tom Roberts, "Fiore Denies Urging Bernardin's Accuser," *National Catholic Reporter*, February 14, 1997; A. W. Richard Sipe, who has been an expert witness in scores of sexual abuse cases, is convinced that Bernardin was homosexually active ("View from the Eye of the Storm," Linkup National Conference, February 23, 2003).

¹³ Pete Sherman, "Defender of the Faith," *Illinois Times*, June 19, 2003.

time dismissed as wild charges against priests and bishops, especially Bishop Daniel Ryan of Springfield, Illinois.¹⁴ Ryan resigned in 1999; he has been involved in curious domestic altercations with men and has been publicly criticized by his own diocese for violating celibacy.¹⁵

Although Fiore and Brady were often dismissed as cranks, after the revelations that began in 2002 no one doubts the existence of widespread corruption in the Church. This sexual corruption sometimes involved murder. Rev. Brey speculated that someone in the Catholic clergy hired a murderer to kill Kunz both to prevent Kunz from exposing abusers and to send a warning to Fiore.¹⁶ Another murder in Wisconsin was motivated by a desire to cover up sexual crimes. The Rev. Ryan Erickson of Hudson, Wisconsin, in 2002 murdered two men to keep his sexual abuse of teenage boys from being exposed (see Erickson case on this website).

The Dane police claim they have a suspect, and that the person's motives are "common," but that there is at the moment not enough evidence to prosecute this person.¹⁷

The teacher who found Kunz's body has been the object of suspicion. Because he found the body, he was covered with Kunz's blood. But Kunz had obviously fought with his assailant, and the teacher was not injured. The teacher stayed with Fiore for several months after the murder, and Fiore noticed nothing suspect.¹⁸

The police claim that they are still pursuing the case, but their website on the Kunz murder was active only in 2003.

¹⁴ Pete Sherman, "Defender of the Faith," *Illinois Times*, June 19, 2003.

¹⁵ RCF, *Ad Maiorem Dei Gloriam*, Summer 2005, p. 17. The Special Panel on Clergy Misconduct of the Diocese of Springfield in Illinois stated that "Bishop Ryan engaged in sexual misconduct with adults and used his authority to conceal this misconduct," (August 2006).

¹⁶ Rob Zaleski, "Is the Killer's Trail Cold?" *Capital Times*, July 3, 2000.

¹⁷ Ed Trevelen, "Suspect Cited in Murder of Priest," *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 6, 2008.

¹⁸ Lee Sensenbrenner, "Kunz Killer Search Goes Beyond State," *Capital Times*, November 14, 2000; Chuck Nowlen, "The Devil and Father Kunz," *Las Vegas Weekly*, April 12, 2001.