

Our Lady of Perpetual Secrets

On November 22, 2010 I picked up my South Bend Tribune to find the tragic story of Elizabeth Seeberg, a 19 year old St. Mary's College Freshman who committed suicide after alleging that she had been sexually assaulted by a Notre Dame football player in a dorm room. The story was brought to light after another story ran in the Chicago Tribune about Ms. Seeberg's bereaved family and their troubling account of the last days of their precious daughter's life. I was amazed to read that the incident had taken place last August, and wondered why the Michiana Community hadn't heard anything about it before now. Perhaps we in Michiana might never had known about the case at all if it weren't for the Chicago Tribune shining a light on the tragedies; the one surrounding Ms. Seeberg's death, and the other one involving the culture of silence which surrounds the University of Our Lady of the Lake.

The November 22nd edition of the South Bend Tribune quoted the Assistant St. Joe County Police Chief, William Redman, who reported that: *"There is no reason Notre Dame had to notify us of the (alleged) sexual incident... We don't investigate crimes at Notre Dame, Period."*

However, in the next day's edition (11/23/10) the public was informed that: *"Assistant Chief and spokesman William Redman took responsibility for providing the incorrect information to The Tribune and other media outlets."* One story apparently wiped away the other, a "media mulligan" if you will; leaving more questions.

If one failed to pay very close attention to the key point in Asst. Chief Redman's revisionary statement, it is possible to then miss the most vital detail omitted from the previous day's faux pas which was... *"We don't investigate crimes at Notre Dame, Period."* This is not merely a statement involving details of when an alleged crime was or was not reported, but rather a philosophic policy between civil and university authorities. A university which, according to the Tribune, *"... has declined to comment on the case, citing federal law that prohibits it from speaking on 'disciplinary cases' involving its students..."* Cheating on tests, breaking curfew, and unauthorized keggers are matters customarily relegated to a University's "disciplinary cases" file, but not sexual assaults. An assault that was reported by Lizzie not only to authorities, but also to her old high school friend and ND junior, Caitlin Young, who told an interviewer: *"I've been so upset seeing him on the field still playing."* Him? Who is "him"? Is "him" a starting player or a possible standout? Has "him" been taken in for questioning between August 31, 2010 and today? And why is Elizabeth's case still floating in a jurisdictional limbo? Perhaps understanding jurisdiction is the key to our entire quest! According to Notre Dame's own website under the heading of "INFORMATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES FOR VICTIMS OF RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT", students are admonished that, *"Sexual assault is prohibited by federal and state law as well as by university policy; students found responsible for sexual assault will ordinarily face disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal from the university... The university encourages students to report all incidents of sexual assault to the police. If the incident occurred **on Notre Dame** property, Notre Dame security police is the appropriate agency. **Off-campus** incidents will likely fall in the **jurisdiction** of the South Bend, St. Joseph County or Mishawaka Police departments..."*

You see noble reader, The University of Our Lady of the Lake is no mere institution of higher learning. Even other private colleges in America which are owned by non-profit religious bodies are subject to the civil laws of the land relative to on-campus misdemeanor or felonious crimes. However, The University of Our Lady is also the property of the Vatican in Rome. "But it's just a Church" you say; Yes, but also **a sovereign State with its own Ambassadors, Secretary of State, etc; which enjoys the same privileges and diplomatic immunity as any secular government in the world.** When one enters the boundaries of the campus of Our Lady (or any other property owned by the Holy See), one is standing on the sovereign soil of The Vatican. The Flag of St. Peter's crown and keys is much more than a mere decoration! To see a contemporary example of this dynamic at work, one needs only recall the events which unfolded in the Boston sex abuse cases under the watchful care of Cardinal Bernard Law. Just days before he was set to answer to the civil authorities of Massachusetts for his proven role in the scandal, he was "spirited away" to the Vatican where he not only presided over one of the funeral masses for the late Pope John Paul II, but continues to is this very day as the head of one of the most prestigious Vatican chapels in Rome. Church Officials even appealed to then President George W. Bush to grant newly elected Pope Benedict XVI **immunity** since he (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) presided over these cases in the name of the Vatican (DVD "Deliver us from Evil", Lionsgate Entertainment, 2006). To recall Cardinal Law or any other churchman from the Vatican to face his crimes would take a legal extradition petition filed between the **governments of The United States of America and the**

Vatican. This is much more involved than merely having a couple of local officers take an immoral preacher into custody from his church building somewhere in Michiana.

Another related story appeared in the Wednesday, December 8th, 2010 edition of the South Bend Tribune concerning another sexual abuse cover-up involving the De La Salle Christian Brothers, who are involved in the education of a reported one million students in 82 countries with 1,000 schools; 75 of which are located in the United States. One of the “brothers”, Raimond Rose, had been moved from parish to parish and assignment to assignment, even though there was full knowledge of his abusive record. When a victim who was featured in the article sought more information from church officials he was told: “...*the brother in question had been forbidden from contact with anyone under 18 and was working in a prison.*” The Catholic Authority in charge, Brother Thomas Johnson, unfortunately failed to tell the man that the particular prison where the “brother” was now assigned was one for “*males from age 10 to 21.*” The AP reporter went on to state: “*This much is certain: The order was well aware that Rose was not supposed to be working with children...*” Well then, where is this ecclesiastical “higher up” responsible for this immoral neglect and subtle yet deliberate deception? “*Johnson is now the order’s vicar general and is based at its headquarters in Rome. He did not respond to an e-mail from the AP*” (sounds sadly familiar doesn’t it?).

As if these accounts weren’t enough, the Tribune gave us yet another article on December 12th, in which the policy of silence and secrecy by the Vatican and its agents was irrefutably demonstrated. This story reported that the government of **the nation of Ireland** demanded information from the Holy See relative to the seemingly perpetual parade of pedophile priests in the service of Holy Mother Church. The article by Frances D’Emilio stated: “... *The Vatican felt “offended” that Ireland failed to respect Holy See “sovereignty” by asking high-ranking churchmen to answer questions from an Irish commission probing decades of sex abuse of minors by clergy.*” The sense of privilege and entitlement to immunity demonstrated by the Vatican’s taking offence at a simple request for vital information leaves one absolutely incredulous; and what does “Vatican Sovereignty” have to do with telling the truth?!

D’Emilio’s report goes on: “*(The Irish commission) sent letters to the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (previously under the leadership of then Cardinal Ratzinger~ emphasis mine) and the Vatican’s ambassador to Ireland seeking information on Vatican officials’ knowledge of cover-ups, but got no replies.... (But) one of Ireland’s most prominent campaigners against the Catholic Church’s cover-up of child abuse, Andrew Madden, said the leaked document offered more evidence that the Vatican was concerned only about protecting itself, not about admitting the truth.... Self-interest ruled the day when their priests were raping children.*” What does this have to do with the Seeberg case you ask?

Is this why, in the December 16th edition of the Chicago Tribune we read of Lizzy Seeberg’s parents expressing a feeling “*like betrayal*” at the hands of The University of Our Lady? The final statement by ND simply revealed that there was nothing more to reveal, and County Prosecutor Dvorak lamented that an investigation couldn’t proceed with any criminal charges since testimony from a dead victim is “*hearsay*” and inadmissible in court. Fortunate timing for the University and the Football player, but unthinkable for the Seebergs. In fact, according to the Chicago report, University authorities didn’t even contact St. Joseph County law enforcement until after they were notified that there was a story coming out in their publication “*revealing the alleged attack.*” “*After the story was published*”, the report goes on to state, “*two Indiana law enforcement agencies abruptly changed their longstanding accounts of interaction with campus police on the case, claiming there were internal misunderstandings*”. Was it also an “*internal misunderstanding*” that caused the Rev. Thomas Doyle, vice president for student affairs, to refuse to even read a letter from Lizzy’s father which contained details relevant to the case, and also refused to forward it to University President, Rev. John Jenkins? I can see why the leadership of Our Lady of Perpetual Secrets would not want to cloud their investigation with evidence. This neglect led the Seeberg’s attorney, Zachary Fardon, to write, “*It is past time for the university to show leadership here,... And it is precisely because you are in decision-making position that you should have access to all the facts.*”

Which “*facts*” referred to by Mr. Fardon have not been reported in the Michiana media? #1 “*it took police two weeks to interview the player*”, or #2 “*She went to a hospital, where she reported the alleged attack to authorities and consented to a DNA evidence kit*” (why did she do that for mere casual, consensual touching?), or #3 The September 2 text message from the football player’s friend to Lizzy warning her, “*Don’t do anything you would regret... Messing with Notre Dame football is a bad idea.*” What is the University’s position now? “*Notre Dame authorities have refused to publically discuss what*

happened and how they handled Lizzy Seeberg's complaint." But at least her family can take comfort in the fact that Our Lady's leadership promised in their statement to *"continue to keep them in prayer"*.

Hopefully Elizabeth will not simply be brushed aside as just an emotionally troubled young woman who succumbed to depression following a "one-nighter" of consensual sexual contact with a gridiron hero; thereby allowing the whole matter to simply drop into "blessed obscurity" at the bottom of Our Lady's campus lake! It is obvious that The Vatican's "vow of silence" continues as it has in all the other relevant cases presented in this article. So if anyone wants to know how the case is going, don't ask the local press, nor the City, County, or State municipal police departments who *"don't investigate crimes at Notre Dame, Period."* Ultimately, the public should simply rest in the knowledge that Our Lady's campus cops and Reverends in the administration have the situation well in hand. It is indeed tragic and unfortunate that Lizzy had the extreme misfortune of being "allegedly" assaulted on Our Lady's campus, instead of off-campus in the jurisdiction of the United States.

It also appears that Lizzy's family and friend Caitlin Young will have to endure *"seeing him on the field still playing"* on New Year's Eve as the loyal sons of Our Lady go marching onward to victory. I pray that they know that many in Michiana will understand if they choose not to tune in... I don't think I will either.

So the next time you attend one of the excellent athletic events sponsored by The University of Our Lady of the Lake, along with your ticket you might also consider bringing your passport. Don't ever forget that you're a visitor, even when the team is at home.

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