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A Glimpse at the Mind of a Pedophile

A former priest who served under Mahony in the Stockton Diocese describes his ploys.

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In a chillingly frank account, a former Roman Catholic priest, promoted 20 years ago by Roger M. Mahony, recently described his decades-long career as a pedophile, including his sexual tastes and how he groomed his young victims for abuse.

In a 15-hour videotaped deposition in March, Oliver O'Grady described how his heart raced when one of the slim, playful boys he preferred towed off af-



SECRETS: Oliver O'Grady, 59, testifies on videotape in Ireland. To secure a victim, he said, "I might have to do a little planning . . . to be sure that the boy was there, to be sure the boy was alone."

ter a swim. He also said he liked to lift little girls' skirts and peek at their underpants.

Asked to demonstrate how he would lure one of his estimated 25 victims into his arms, the 59-year-old Irish native softened his voice, flashed an avuncular smile and looked directly into the video camera.

"Hi, Sally," O'Grady impro-

vised. "How are you doing? Come here. I want to give you a hug. You are a sweetheart. You know that. You are very special to me. I like you a lot."

If his hug met no resistance, O'Grady testified, he would take the child's compliance as "permission" to molest.

The deposition came in con-
[See Priest, Page A23]

Disgraced Priest Describes a Molester's Tactics

[Priest, from Page A1]

ection with lawsuits filed against the Stockton Diocese over alleged abuse by clergy. Mahony, who was bishop of Stockton from 1980 to 1985 before heading the Los Angeles Archdiocese, inherited O'Grady, who had admitted years earlier to molesting an 11-year-old girl. In 1984, police investigated a therapist's report that O'Grady had molested a boy.

After police declined to file charges, Mahony transferred O'Grady to a rural parish and later promoted him to pastor there, where he allegedly molested three more victims, including a baby girl who suffered vaginal scarring, according to plaintiffs' lawyers. Mahony has said he was unaware of any molestation reports. The additional victims were molested after he left the diocese.

"The cardinal acted on the information he had, just as the police investigator did," church attorney Don Woods said.

Costa Mesa-based plaintiffs' attorney John C. Manly conducted the deposition in Ireland. The now-defrocked priest, an Irish citizen and native of Limerick, was deported from the U.S. in 2001, after serving seven years in California state prison for sexually abusing two brothers. He lives in Thurles, Ireland.

A transcript of the deposition was filed Tuesday in Alameda County Superior Court, where the Stockton Diocese is defending four lawsuits alleging that the church failed to protect parishioners from abuse. Manly filed the transcript in opposing a church motion to dismiss one of the suits.

O'Grady, on the video, asked why church officials did not remove him from ministry after he committed the molestations.

"I think it probably would have been best if, back in 1984, they said, 'Look, we need to put a halt to this. We need to take you out,'" O'Grady told lawyers during the questioning. "But even the 1984 situation, as I understand it, was handled as best it could have been handled at the time."

Woods said Tuesday that O'Grady "was not trying to say what should have been done. He's saying I wish it could have been done differently."

"It's a lament from hindsight," he said.

An attorney for the Stockton Diocese, Paul Balestracci, declined to comment, noting the

ON THE WEB

To see the Oliver O'Grady deposition video, go to latimes.com/ogrady.

open lawsuits over O'Grady's misconduct.

O'Grady's deposition offers a far-reaching, and often disturbing, glimpse into the mind of a convicted pedophile. Still, there were times during the marathon question-and-answer session when he was less than candid.

He refused to name any of his 25 victims, invoking his 5th Amendment right against self-incrimination. He at first denied molesting one little girl, then the next day admitted that he had lied and that he had abused her. He said his abuse ended in the mid-1980s, but in his criminal case he had pleaded guilty to molestations as late as 1991.

Although O'Grady voiced remorse for his abuses, he often appeared to be enjoying his videotaped performance. At one point, he winked into the camera.

O'Grady testified that he was molested as a child by two priests in the sacristy of his church. The first occurred when he was 10 and an altar boy, he said.

The priest "began the conversation by asking how I was, what I was going to do for the day, and I remember he was — he called me over to him and he began to hug me, you know, in a kind of gentle way, first of all.

"Then he turned me around ... which means I had my back to him with him standing behind me, and then the hands would come down and hug me here and then went lower."

When he was growing up, he testified, he was involved in molestation within his family, both as perpetrator and victim. And when he was a teenager, he added, a priest touched him sexually.

"It was not a very pleasant experience on some occasions, but it was a very normal thing. Nobody talked about it," he said. "I did not consider it a very serious criminal matter."

O'Grady testified that his own sexual attraction to children began before he was ordained a priest in 1971.

"The only thing I understood religion to say at the time was that anything ... to do with sexuality was sinful, and that is where a lot of my conflict came," he tes-

tified.

His first assignment as a priest was to the Stockton Diocese in 1971. Five years later, O'Grady testified in an earlier deposition, he fondled an 11-year-old girl he had met at a summer camp and invited to sleep over at the rectory.

"I remember going into her bed, and I tried to caress her and fondle her, and I sensed her objections to that, nonverbally, and I stayed for a little while more and then decided not to continue. So I left and went back to my own bed," he told lawyers during the March deposition, estimating that he had spent no more than 20 minutes in the girl's bed.

The girl's parents complained to then-Bishop Merlin Guilfoyle, who preceded Mahony in Stockton. O'Grady testified that the bishop, who is now deceased, confronted him and he confessed.

O'Grady wrote the family a letter of apology, angering Guilfoyle, O'Grady said. The letter was in O'Grady's personnel file when Mahony assumed the bishopric, according to court records.

O'Grady said he suffered no repercussions for his transgression.

"Life just continued," he testified.

Court records show that in 1984, four years after Mahony became bishop of Stockton, O'Grady told his therapist he had fondled a 9-year-old boy. The therapist alerted child welfare officials, and police opened an investigation.

O'Grady took the 5th Amendment when asked during the deposition what he told his therapist. But he testified that Mahony was out of town at the time, so he told the bishop's second-in-command about the investigation. He said the official sent him to talk to the diocese's lawyer.

The child, who had been asleep during the alleged molestation, said he was unaware of any abuse, and police declined to file charges. Court records show, however, that police said an attorney for the diocese promised that O'Grady would be transferred to a job where he would not have contact with children, and that he would be sent to therapy.

O'Grady testified that Mahony sent him to a psychiatrist for an evaluation, which the cardinal has acknowledged was the

church's standard operating procedure at the time for handling pedophile priests. Almost immediately thereafter, O'Grady said, Mahony transferred him to a parish in San Andreas, about an hour outside Stockton. Mahony later promoted him to pastor.

There was no school at his new assignment, but O'Grady testified that he supervised hundreds of students who came in on weekends and after school to study Catechism.

Mahony has testified in court that he never saw the letter of apology O'Grady wrote to his female victim's family. He also said that he did not know the details of what O'Grady had told his therapist and that once police declined to file charges in connection with the 9-year-old boy, he saw no reason to investigate further.

O'Grady "was in counseling at the time," Woods said, "and the second opinion that the diocese obtained said the counseling was satisfactory and he should continue with it.

The second opinion did not recommend that he be removed from ministry, nor did the [evaluation] render any diagnosis of pedophilia."

After years of therapy, O'Grady said, he's embarrassed and ashamed of his sexual attraction to children.

But asked to describe his "type," he gave an animated response. "Generally, a boy who was — spontaneous, affectionate, playful, generally around the age of 10, 11, and who seemed to maybe need somebody to care for him. I'm not saying that he necessarily had family problems but seemed to identify with me as somebody who he could trust, who he could come to, who was willing to take care of him."

The priest searched his congregation for submissive children. "If they demonstrated affection, by hugging and that sort of stuff, it sort of awakened within me urges to be affectionate in return," O'Grady testified.

"If I got comfortable doing that and felt he was comfortable with me hugging him, and I had thoughts or feelings that I wanted to go further, I might at that time explore that possibility," he said.

"I might have to do a little planning . . . to be sure that the boy was there, to be sure the boy was alone, and that there was not any hurry on him leaving."

O'Grady testified that he had

sexual relationships with two mothers of children he molested. He also said he occasionally wore women's lingerie he found among donated clothes left at his church.

"Perhaps I was trying to use external things to arouse myself," he said.

A Stockton jury in 1998 awarded one of O'Grady's victims \$30 million, later reduced to \$7 million. Jury members told The Times they thought Mahony was untruthful on the witness stand, that he had allowed O'Grady's pattern of abuse to continue.

Mahony said he thought the jurors were wrong and that he took extraordinary steps to protect children.

Over the years, O'Grady said, he tried to understand and possibly curb his appetite for children — reading books about his disorder, touring a residential treatment center for pedophile priests and eventually opening his parish to secret Sex Addicts

Anonymous meetings so he could attend.

After O'Grady was released from prison and returned to Ireland, the Stockton diocese paid for him to undergo three years of outpatient therapy, he said, and also agreed to pay him \$800 a month for 10 years starting on his 65th birthday.

"I would have liked somebody in the diocese or somebody to have intervened as early as possible in helping me confront this situation as a very, very serious one," he said, "and help educate me to the very serious nature of the problem that I had and was causing."

Each time he reached into a child's pants, O'Grady said, he knew his conduct was wrong, "definitely a sin." But there was "another part of me saying, 'I can't seem to control these desires, thoughts, feelings when they come.'"

After a molestation, O'Grady testified he always went to a priest and confessed his sin.