

BIGOTRY EXPLAINS FALSE ACCUSATIONS

False accusations against priests are hardly uncommon these days, but when anti-Catholicism accounts for lies against lay Catholics, the problem only worsens. Consider the recent news concerning Tim Udinski.

After Udinski was fired as the lacrosse coach at Lansdale Catholic High School last year, he made several accusations over a seven-month period claiming that the football coach and the new lacrosse coach were sexually abusing students. He also maintained that the principal of the suburban Philadelphia school, Tim Quinn, knew about the offenses.

After detectives spent 184 hours on this case, interviewing 97 people (at a cost of more than \$8250), they determined that the charges were bogus. Standing by itself, this wouldn't be big news, but what made it so disturbing was Udinski's motive: he admitted that he fabricated the whole story, just so he could "get the Church."

Landsdale Catholic High is in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and it was to the archdiocese that Udinski sent his anonymous e-mails. Montgomery County DA Risa Vetri Ferman acknowledged that Udinski sought to exploit the high profile that the sexual abuse of minors has been given. Indeed, she questioned, "How do you undo that? How do you unring the bell?"

Here's the clincher. When asked why he lied, Udinski said, "I just wanted to *get back at the church*, Tim Quinn, and I was just generally mad." (Our italics.)

Over the past three years, 173 false accusations have been made against Catholic priests nationwide. Also, on July 6, Philadelphia Archbishop Charles Chaput stated that four of the six priests who were recently investigated were found suitable

for ministry. Isn't it time we learned the names of those who make false charges? And how do we "unring the bell" for all those priests—and lay persons—whose reputations have been smeared by merchants of bigotry and greed?