

# FR. GROESCHEL UNDER FIRE

In a recent interview with the *National Catholic Register*, Father Benedict Groeschel *hypothesized* how a young person (14, 16 or 18, as he put it) could conceivably take advantage of a priest who was having a nervous breakdown. He also referred to Jerry Sandusky, the disgraced Penn State football coach, as “this poor guy.” For these remarks, and related comments, he was labeled as a defender of child abuse.

The accusation is scurrilous. In the same interview, Groeschel emphatically said that priests who are sexual abusers “have to leave.” His reference to Sandusky was exactly the way a priest-psychologist might be expected to speak: “poor guy” conveys sympathy for his maladies—it is not a defense of his behavior! Indeed, Groeschel asked, “Why didn’t anyone say anything?”

Groeschel holds a Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University, and has put his training to work by counseling some of the most mentally and socially challenged people in our society. In addition, he has been screening men for the priesthood for decades and has an impressive record. His service to the Church has been nothing less than heroic.

Groeschel is nearly 80 years old. A few years ago, he was almost killed in an accident that left him disabled; it has definitely taken a toll on him. When asked by the media, Bill Donohue said, “I have known him for two decades. I’ve read his books, listened to his tapes—on sexual abuse—and have come to know a great priest. To condemn him for one part of one interview is wholly unjust.”