

AN IRISH TRAGEDY, Book Review

By: Joe Rigert; Publisher: Crossland, 167 pages, \$10.99.

Review: A tightly written, eye-opening analysis of a long history of sex crimes by members of the Catholic Church -- and why the scandals aren't likely to be over yet.

An Irish Tragedy, by Joe Rigert

Did you hear about the Irish Catholic priest booted from a Missouri diocese for sexual misconduct with a girl?

He landed a job at Disney World. (But left, once Disney World found out.)

Another Irish clergyman, Anthony O'Connell, headed that same diocese's high school seminary, where he molested boys who were hoping to become priests.

He later became a bishop.

In his new book, "An Irish Tragedy," veteran investigative reporter Joe Rigert of Minnesota tracks the role Irish immigrant priests played in the U.S. clergy sexual abuse scandals.

Rigert, a former Star Tribune reporter, journeys across America to Ireland and to the Vatican. There, he probes into the not-so-celibate lives of clergy working under the pope's nose.

Rigert offers a tightly written analysis of clergy sex crimes and duplicitous church officials who protected child predators. He shows why Catholics would be foolish to assume that the crisis is over.

For one thing, the perpetrators of the cover-ups are still in power. And for another, the scandals focused on child victims. Church officials still routinely minimize adults victimized by lecherous clergy.

O'Connell sought to be a priest in the United States back when dioceses welcomed Irish clergy like manna from heaven. Still, 36 dioceses refused him before Missouri opened a door. He later became a bishop in Tennessee, then Florida, despite evidence of being a predator.

When U.S. clergy scandals captured headlines in 2002, the Missouri victims spoke publicly, forcing O'Connell's resignation.

Still, he remains on the roster of U.S. bishops. He's supposedly living a humble life at a South Carolina monastery.

But, as Rigert reports, monasteries aren't always the guileless places they seem.