



## A Friend to Us All

By Paul Ashe, President of the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling  
and Past President of the National Council on Problem Gambling

On September 15, people from across the country gathered in New Jersey to celebrate the 90th birthday of a most remarkable man, Monsignor Joseph A. Dunne. Well known in the gambling recovery community, Monsignor Dunne has touched, and continues to affect, the lives of countless people. The 90th birthday gala was simply one way for many of us to say thanks.

Another way for some of us to express appreciation is for the Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling (FCCG) to dedicate this newsletter as a tribute to such a great individual. We do this, however, not only to applaud Monsignor Dunne but also to educate our readers who may not be fully aware of his contributions to the field of problem gambling prevention, education and treatment.

To be perfectly clear at the start of this article, without the Monsignor's tremendous efforts, we would still probably be trying to convince people that there is such a thing as problem gambling. He was the prime driving force, alongside



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A friend's? A family member's?**

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### *Monsignor Joseph A. Dunne*

psychiatrist Dr. Robert Custer, that brought problem gambling out of the closet and made it nationally known.

Monsignor Joseph Dunne's early work in the recovery field was as a chaplain for the New York City Police Department. Back in those days, they called him "The Body Snatcher." With full authority, he would literally pull police officers with alcohol problems off their beats and immediately place them in treatment.

It was in that capacity as chaplain that Monsignor Dunne began to see problem gambling in the same addictive light as alcoholism. It also became clear to him that many police officers were dependent upon both alcohol and gambling. However, the challenge was that no treatment for gambling addiction existed. Then with input from Gamblers Anonymous (GA), Monsignor Dunne began his push that has since spawned a vast number of treatment and other problem gambling programs nationwide.

The most significant of the Monsignor's contributions, again with input from GA, was the founding of the National Council on Problem Gambling (NCPG) back in 1972. It was in this way that he and GA were able to spread the word about gambling addiction and enlist others in a nationwide effort to relieve the suffering of problem gamblers, their families and others. During those days, Monsignor Dunne was also the main support for Dr. Custer's groundbreaking work that identified "pathological" gambling as an illness in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM III).

As the first president of the NCPG, and afterwards as its Director Emeritus, Monsignor Dunne stimulated and helped to create NCPG affiliates across the country. Today, there are 35 affiliate councils like the FCCG in the United States. After 1972, many other countries established organizations similar to the NCPG, including the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany, South Africa and Israel.

At the age of 90, Monsignor Dunne is still the no-nonsense, hands-on kind of person he always was. His grassroots approach to making good things happen for people who need help continues to change and save many lives.

We wish Monsignor Dunne well and thank him for not only leading us in the fight against problem gambling but also for being there as a friend and mentor over the years. He has left quite a legacy and for this we will be forever grateful.

**Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc.**

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**Our Mission:**

The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling, Inc. (FCCG), established in 1988, is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) educational and advocacy corporation under contract with Florida state government. The FCCG's primary mission is to help persons adversely affected by difficulties due to problem and compulsive gambling. The FCCG maintains a neutral stance on the issue of legalized gambling while seeking to assist citizens in need of support. Governed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the FCCG is an affiliate of the National Council on Problem Gambling.

# The Power of One: Monsignor Dunne as Others See Him

“Monsignor Dunne had a method of getting you to do the right thing. Whether he was working with individuals, police departments, the courts or the psychiatric community, he could get people to see the light.”

*Phil Manzo, Police Psychologist and Gambling Program Coordinator, New York City Police Department, retired.*

“I rely heavily on his wise counsel that combines his public administration training and practical wisdom with an astute sense of policy and politics. He demonstrates that advocacy is a passion and neutrality is a strength.”

*Keith Whyte, Executive Director of the National Council on Problem Gambling*

“He is and has always been a tough, tenacious and compassionate visionary. His ability to help people by being able to see the big picture and then getting the job done is absolutely amazing.”

*Ed Looney, Executive Director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of New Jersey*

“The thing that impressed me the most about the Monsignor was his absolute passion for and commitment to helping people on a personal basis. Just for that alone, he was an inspiration to all of us in the prevention and treatment field.”

*Louis Lieberman, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY and Research Professor, University of South Florida at Sarasota*

“The strength of his will opened so many doors for problem gamblers. It is because of him that there are now so many treatment programs in New York and other parts of the country.”

*Don Thoms, Director of St. Vincent's Gambling Treatment Program in New York City, retired*

“Monsignor Dunne's leadership truly brought the ‘invisible illness’ of problem gambling out into the light. His compassion and dedication then provided the impetus for what we now know in this field.”

*Henry R. Lesieur, Ph.D., Staff Psychologist, Rhode Island Gambling Treatment Program*

“Monsignor Dunne's tenacious dedication has been ‘a beacon of light’ to myself and countless others in recovery.”

*Irwin S., Gambler's Anonymous*

“Monsignor Dunne's fearless and compassionate leadership has made him a very trusted and loved individual. It is because of his willingness to stand alone on the little understood issue of problem gambling that countless gamblers and their families have found the road to recovery.”

*Pat Fowler, Executive Director, The Florida Council on Compulsive Gambling*

# Some Thoughts Directly from Monsignor Joseph A. Dunne

*As expressed and captured in an interview on August 10, 2006*

## Monsignor Joseph A. Dunne

“You know, it takes time to do the kind of things we do in our line of work. You do it because you love the people who are sick and can’t help themselves. Otherwise, people get into even worse trouble and maybe even die because they are neglected. Sometimes they don’t want your help, you know, but if you wait long enough you maneuver to the best of your ability, then you have them.

“Most of all, you have to really be convinced that what you are doing has to be done. Then you have to work with the given organizational structures until you find ways of accomplishing it. This you absolutely must do, even if it costs you friendships. You will face opposition but if you are lucky, like me, the Good Lord gives you the ability to outlive such individuals.

“Yes, people will criticize you and think that you are an egomaniac at times. This may even give you some sleepless nights. However, in the end, the addicted people you are trying to help profit because you suffered and took their problems on your shoulders.

*“...you have to keep in mind the sick people who can’t help themselves.”*

“In order to be truly successful, whether it is dealing with alcoholics or problem gamblers, you have to keep in mind the sick people who can’t help themselves. Once you try to help them, you should never be discouraged by failure or inability because in time,

you can win out. However, you can only win out if you stay with them and you are convinced that your efforts will work.

“It’s like that for individuals and organizations. Gamblers Anonymous (GA) is an excellent example. Those folks have contributed a great deal to the salvation of thousands and thousands of problem gamblers and their families.

*“...the abuse of gambling is an illness.”*

“Look at Robert Custer who was a well known physician in the Veteran’s Administration. His work in rehabilitating veterans addicted to gambling as well as alcohol is legendary. Custer, I think, was the number one person in furthering the National Council on Problem Gambling’s (NCPG) mission in the early days. He helped make the organization known to people and helped provide the means necessary for it to grow and be effective.

“Now, the NCPG’s mission is exactly as it was in Custer’s day. However, in the heightened gambling climate we all live in, that mission is ten times more important than it was in days gone by. Since gambling has been adopted by huge hotels and other businesses to attract people to unimagined wealth and joy, we have even bigger challenges than we did years ago.

“While the leaders of the gambling industry provide entertainment and pleasure for people, they must also understand that the abuse of gambling



is an illness. As part of that understanding, they should also shoulder responsibility for these abuses. That means shouldering financial contribution to assist in the prevention of such problems as well as the rehabilitation of problem gamblers.

“As I look at all these challenging issues, I would advise the NCPG and its affiliates to forcefully move forward in the following three ways:

- Help people understand that while gambling by itself is not wrong and can be fun, it can also be harmful to those who don’t know their limits.
- Take advantage of the opportunities now present in making the illness of problem gambling known to the public.
- Work towards preventing problem gambling and making treatment available for problem gamblers.

“The battle is far from over, but together we can make it happen if we each play our part to the best of our ability.”



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WHEN GAMBLING BECOMES A PROBLEM

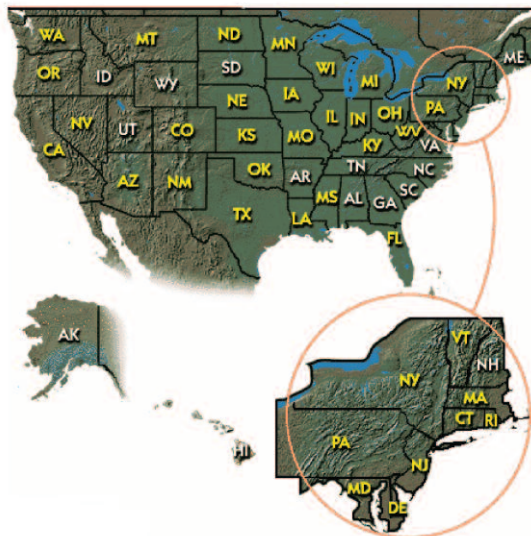
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National  
Council  
On Problem  
Gambling  
(NCPG)  
Affiliates

*States in yellow have  
NCPG Affiliate  
Council*

*Map used with permission  
of the NCPG*



The NCPG  
was founded  
in 1972  
by  
Monsignor  
Joseph  
A.  
Dunne