

Reverend Joseph P. Bonner

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1926
YEAR OF DEATH:	2007
ORDINATION:	May 30, 1953

Employment/Assignment History

6/1953 – 9/1954	Asst. Pastor, St. Ann's, Freeland, PA
9/1954 – 3/1964	Asst. Pastor, St. Nicholas, Wilkes-Barre, PA
3/1964 – 6/1964	Asst. Pastor, Ascension, Williamsport, PA
6/1964 – 1/1970	Asst. Pastor, St. Francis, Nanticoke, PA
1/1970 – 9/1970	Asst. Pastor, St. Cecilia, Wyoming, PA
9/1970 – 1/1972	Asst. Pastor, St. Juliana, Rock Lake, PA
1/1972 – 6/1981	Pastor, Resurrection, Muncy, PA
6/1981 – 6/1982	Pastor, St. Patrick's, Milford, PA
6/1982 – 9/1982	Pastor, St. Paul's, Scranton, PA
9/1982 – 9/1985	Pastor, St. James', Pleasant Mount, PA
9/1985 – 7/1998	Pastor, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Weston, PA
7/1998 – 6/2002	Retired, Pastor Emeritus, Sacred Heart of Jesus, Weston, PA
6/2002	Removed from ministry

Summary

On May 13, 2002, the Diocese of Scranton was notified by an attorney via letter correspondence that his client had been sexually molested by Father Joseph P. Bonner in 1975. The attorney explained that the victim and his family had been visiting from Arizona that year and were invited to visit with Bonner in the rectory. They spent the night there. The victim's two aunts and his cousin were provided with accommodations on the third floor while the victim was given a pull-out bed that was located directly across from Bonner's bedroom on the second floor. After the victim fell asleep, he awoke to discover Bonner lying in bed with him, stroking his [the victim's] penis. The letter stated that when the client asked Bonner what he was doing, Bonner replied, "*I am sorry . . . I shouldn't have done that; Go back to bed.*"

On May 30, 2002, the Diocese notified the Lycoming County District Attorney's Office of the allegation. The Diocese was subsequently advised that the statute of limitations period had expired. The District Attorney advised, however, that he would alert the local police to the allegation. He further advised stated that he may have an investigator speak with Bonner and the victim.

On May 30, 2002, Bishop James C. Timlin sent a letter to the attorney, advising him that Bonner had retired. He stated that the Diocese was appalled that alleged behavior would ever happen, or that such an accusation would be made against one of their priests. Timlin suggested

Summary

that the victim contact Bonner directly in order to achieve a reconciliation of the troubling matter.

On July 31, 2002, counsel for the Diocese notified the victim's counsel that the Diocese would make no payment of any kind to his client as it had no responsibility for the alleged conduct. The letter suggested that "*you seek whatever redress you feel is appropriate from the responsible party.*"

On January 27, 2003, a settlement was reached and the victim received \$25,000. It was agreed that the settlement did not constitute an admission by Bonner and that the parties could not release the contents of the settlement agreement to the public.

On March 12, 2004, the victim contacted the Diocese to report that he felt that he had not received any support from Timlin. He pointed out that Timlin refused to inform the parishes where Bonner had been assigned so that other victims might feel comfortable to come forward with any reports of abuse. On April 13, 2004, the Diocese requested that the pastors of the parishes to which Bonner had been assigned publish a "Notice Regarding Sexual Abuse" in their bulletin. The Notice stated, in part, that "*clerical sexual abuse may have occurred in this parish in the past. If this is the case, please come forward and make it known.*"

On November 29, 2004, the Diocese received a report from a 47-year-old male who advised that he had been sexually abused by Bonner when he was 14 to 16 years old. He stated that he was not interested in pursuing a lawsuit against Bonner or the Diocese. The Diocese sent a letter to the Lycoming County District Attorney's Office, advising of the allegation. On December 6, 2004, the Diocese agreed to assume financial responsibility for 20 psychiatric sessions for the victim.