

Priest N

Visiting priests often worked for extended periods of time without ever officially being incardinated in the Diocese. One of these priests, from a country in the South Pacific, sexually abused girls, in a least two parish assignments.

The mother of one of the girls explained to the Grand Jury that one day *Priest N* showed up at her home with a cake. She invited him to stay for dinner. They had a large family so after dinner her husband went upstairs to help the children, while she cleaned up the kitchen. *Priest N* was in the den. Mom was unaware that her ten-year-old daughter had finished her bath and come downstairs until she walked into the kitchen complaining that *Priest N* wanted her to sit on his lap and she had refused. Mom explained to her daughter that it was ok to say no to this request. Later that evening, their daughter also disclosed that *Priest N* had put his hand in her pants. Her parents decided that they would not have anything more to do with *Priest N*. They decided they would not make a formal complaint to the Diocese, because they felt that they would not be believed. They did not complain to their pastor. It never occurred to them to call the police.

Years later, Mom decided to contact the Diocese about *Priest N*. She also encouraged her daughter to do this. She wrote a letter to a high ranking Diocesan official. (Grand Jury Exhibit 136) When she got no response to her correspondence, she wrote to the Diocese again and sent a short note about the situation to the priest who had been the pastor of their parish at the time of the abuse. (Grand Jury Exhibits 137,138) A priest who handled personnel matters for the Diocese contacted her and they eventually met in the Chancery. At the meeting she gave a letter to this priest from her daughter, attesting to the facts of the abuse. (Grand Jury Exhibit 142) In addition to the priest who handled issues relating to personnel, there was another priest present at the meeting. He was an attorney but did not disclose this fact to her. When she asked why he was

there, she was told simply that he was a member of the team that would meet with priests in situations like these. After she had related the incident to this priest he offered that perhaps it had been a cultural misunderstanding. The mother emphatically disagreed. By that time she had begun to make inquiries in the parish about *Priest N* and she had learned that there were a number of other victims of *Priest N*. Like her daughter, they had been touched as very young girls. She thought that these other families would be willing to speak with Diocesan officials and related this to them at the meeting. Unfortunately, these families decided not to come forward. They remained interested in what was happening with *Priest N*, so the mother kept them informed.

During the meeting with Diocesan officials they told her that they had confronted *Priest N* with the accusations and that he had denied them. She asked the Diocese to investigate his other assignments to determine if he had abused other girls. They refused. She also asked them to make a general announcement in order that victims could come forward for help. They would not.

The priests did tell her that *Priest N* had been removed from his assignment and sent for a psychiatric evaluation and treatment. Parishioners were told that he was on a leave of absence, due to stress. Sometime later, she was informed that *Priest N* had admitted his history of sexual abuse in the evaluation process. She asked the Diocese whether they would keep her informed of *Priest N*'s progress and they said no. They did offer that she could call them.

Ultimately, the Diocese told her that *Priest N* would have to undergo a long and extensive rehabilitation. After that, he might be able to get another assignment, but it would not involve children. Soon after, she was surprised to learn that *Priest N* had been released from the Diocese because they determined that was untreatable. The Diocese did not know *Priest N*'s

whereabouts, as they had relinquished all responsibility for him. Based on the information she received about *Priest N's* poor diagnosis, the mother renewed her request for a Diocesan investigation of all of his parish assignments. The Diocese refused to do this.

Another family, in another parish, received an odd visit from *Priest N* one night. They also had a large family, with six children. Their oldest child, a daughter, was eighteen and in college. The night in question *Priest N* came to their home unannounced. This was very unusual. He had never before visited them. He was invited for dinner. During a conversation *Priest N* disclosed to the mother that he never really wanted to be a priest but that he had done so as not to disappoint his mother. *Priest N* confessed that he had visited their daughter at college and that there had been an incident of inappropriate conduct between them. *Priest N* was asked to leave and they immediately contacted their daughter who explained what happened.

*Priest N* had called her out of the blue and invited her to dinner. He was visiting in the area. After picking her up at her dorm, *Priest N* indicated that he had to return to his motel for something. While they were there he suggested that they have dinner in his room. When *Priest N* disappeared into the bathroom, the girl noticed a camera on a tripod set up in the room. She thought that this was strange. Suddenly, *Priest N* came up behind her, and put his hand inside of her blouse. She jumped up and asked him to take her home.

After her parents went up to her college to make sure that she was all right, they notified their pastor. He told them that he would contact the Diocese. Soon afterwards, they received a call from another priest. She told him the details of the story and he explained *Priest N* would receive therapy once a week for his problem. She told this priest that *Priest N* should be removed from the parish. The priest explained that he would not be, and that the family should find another parish to attend. They did this for a while until *Priest N* was transferred.

*Priest N's* parish pastor from this time period testified that approximately fifteen years after the incident, he met one of the victims by chance and she advised him of the abuse. Upon hearing this news, he contacted a Diocesan official involved in these cases. The official advised him to sit tight and see if any further calls were made with reference to the allegations. Diocesan officials did not conduct any investigation or make a report at that time.

In early 2000, the parents of the abused girl wrote a letter to a high ranking official. It delineated the abuse inflicted upon their daughter. (Grand Jury Exhibit 136). A follow-up letter was sent to another official of the Diocese asking why there had been no acknowledgment of their first complaint. (Grand Jury Exhibit 137). In March of 2000, the same parent wrote to the pastor of the parish where the abuse occurred, and included a copy of her previous correspondence. (Grand Jury Exhibit 138). After a series of letters that essentially accomplished nothing, (Grand Jury Exhibits 139, 140), the victim herself wrote to the Diocese explaining the exact nature of the abuse. (Grand Jury Exhibit 142).

Finally, the pastor testified that he sent a letter to the Diocese in March of 2000 concerning this case. The letter had no salutation, and he did not recall exactly to whom he sent it. In the letter, he told of his chance conversation with the victim, the Diocesan response to his report of it, and his belief that the victim's parents were credible. (Grand Jury Exhibit 143).

The Grand Jury finds that the Diocesan response to the pastor's complaint to sit tight in the face of allegations of criminal conduct by a priest was emblematic of the manner in which these cases were handled. The attitude of the Diocese revealed that either no consideration was given to the real possibility that the priest may still be offending, or it was considered, and ignored.