

Father Thomas W. Rogers

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1923
YEAR OF DEATH:	2005
ORDINATION:	January 26, 1952

Employment/Assignment History

1953	St. Edward, Herminie, PA
1953 – 1954	St. Mary, Freeport, PA
1954 – 1955	Immaculate Conception, Connellsville, PA
6/29/1955 – 7/4/1956	Immaculate Conception, Irwin, PA
7/5/1956 – 7/7/1958	SS Simon and Jude, Blairsville, PA
7/8/1958 – 1960	St. John the Baptist, Scottdale, PA
1/6/1961	Incardinated in the Diocese of Greensburg, PA
6/3/1965 – 6/24/1968	St. Anthony, Clymer, PA
6/25/1968 – 8/7/1972	St. Charles Borromeo, Suatersville, PA
8/8/1972 – 2/18/1981	St. Mary, Ford City, PA
2/19/1981 – 1/21/1991	Seven Dolars, Yukon, PA
1/22/1992 – 11/4/1998	St. Anne, Rostraver, PA
11/4/1998	Retired

Summary

On August 14, 1962, Monsignor Robert J. Giroux of the Diocese of Ogdensburg, New York wrote a letter to Bishop William Connare of the Diocese of Greensburg regarding an incident in which Father Thomas Rogers was alleged to have attempted to sexually assault a high school-aged boy. According to Giroux, state and local police received a complaint from the boy that a man attempted to sexually assault him while he was hitch-hiking near Saranac Lake. The boy was able to escape, however, and provided a detailed description of his attacker, the vehicle he was driving and a license plate number. The police determined that the vehicle was registered to Rogers, who was visiting his mother in the area at the time. The police also located two witnesses who were willing to testify to seeing the boy with Rogers.

According to Giroux, "*[k]nowing that a priest might be involved the police did not wish to follow their usual procedures.*" When Rogers was confronted by police in the rectory of the local church, he denied the incident and claimed to have been at the local parish at the time it occurred. Rogers claimed that his vehicle could have been stolen and thereafter returned while he was at the church, which the police noted would have been impossible given the time in which this would have had to occur. Further, the victim's description of Rogers as his assailant was "*perfect*" and detailed. Regardless, Rogers maintained his innocence, and even later provided Connare with a letter in 1963 from an anonymous person who admitted to stealing the

Summary

vehicle and attacking the minor. Rogers left town the same day that he was interviewed by police.

The victim's father was called to the rectory to discuss the matter with police and Church officials. Described as "*a good Catholic*," he agreed not to pursue charges so long as there was an admission of guilt by Rogers and he left town. Similarly, the police offered to drop the matter so long as Rogers stayed away from the community.

On August 22, 1962, Connare responded to Giroux via letter. Connare indicated he had confronted Rogers, who categorically denied the accusations. Connare appeared to be conflicted by Rogers' denial and reluctant to "*flatly call him a 'liar.'*" Connare also mentioned that Rogers claimed to personally know the Chief of Police in Saranac Lake, who he called by his first name. Rogers also remarked that his brother was also on the force. Connare expressed concern about Rogers returning to the Saranac Lake area given his mother living there, but that he would forbid him if necessary. Ultimately, driven by a perceived need to "*proceed cautiously to protect his [Roger's] reputation,*" no further action was taken and Connare assured Giroux that he would "*wait, and watch carefully.*"

Connare received a reply letter from the Bishop of Ogdensburg written September 10, 1962. Noting that the matter of Roger's attempted sexual assault had "been well handed here," he pressed Connare not to permit Rogers to return to the area because of the involvement of the state police, whom he described as heavily patrolling the area, and the father of the victim, who he believed would pursue charges should Rogers return.

A review of Rogers' file in 2002 prompted Bishop Anthony Bosco to inform Rogers that he was no longer permitted to publicly present himself as a priest.