

# **Reverend Carl Roemele**

## **Biographical Information**

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1934
YEAR OF DEATH:	Unknown
ORDINATION:	May 6, 1963

## **Employment/Assignment History**

5/1963-5/1964	St. Joseph, Mt. Oliver, PA
5/1964-6/1966	St. Alexis, Wexford, PA
6/1966-8/1967	St. William, Pittsburgh, PA
8/1967-5/1972	St. Joseph, Duquesne, PA
5/1972-9/1975	St. Agatha, Bridgeville, PA
9/1975-2/1976	Allegheny Community College, Pittsburgh, PA
9/1975-2/1976	Epiphany, Pittsburgh, PA
9/1975-2/1976	Allegheny County Jail, Pittsburgh, PA
2/1976-8/1976	Leave of absence; voluntary laicization

## **Summary**

In late June 1967, the Diocese of Pittsburgh received a letter from a mother regarding sexual abuse committed by Father Carl Roemele. The letter was addressed to "Your Excellency" and revealed that Roemele engaged in sexual misconduct towards four different young boys while he was a parochial vicar at St. William. She alleged that Roemele made sexual advances towards her son (first victim), his friend, and then another boy in a separate incident, when he took them to a cabin. Additionally, she alleged that on a fourth occasion while at the camp site with a boy, Roemele told him to shower after swimming. She stated that Roemele then entered the shower with the boy and when Roemele dropped the soap, he tried to bite the boy while bending to pick it up. The mother also expressed concern that Roemele gave the eighth graders a talk about sex prior to leaving his assignment. In the file provided by the Diocese, there is no documentation to indicate that any official action was taken towards Roemele.

In mid-August 2004, a letter was sent to Bishop Wuerl wherein an adult male alleged that he was continually abused by Roemele when he was an altar boy at St. Joseph. He reported that Roemele would grope and fondle him - - as well as two other altar servers - - before mass. The male also reported that when he was in sixth grade, Roemele took him and other members of a basketball team to a cabin at Aleo Lake. While there, he witnessed Roemele masturbating a young boy in the middle of the night.

In September 2004, Diocesan officials met with the victim to discuss his recent complaint to Wuerl. There, the victim further outlined his allegations and was offered counseling. He declined. He was asked to pass along the information for clergy staff to the other victims. In

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late September, 2004, the Diocese sent a letter to the Allegheny District Attorney's Office, advising of the allegation.

Contained within the file was a March, 2008 letter from a law firm. Included in the correspondence was an undated letter from another victim of Roemele. The third victim alleged that he was abused around the year 1968 when he served as an altar boy at St. Joseph. He was either 11 or 12 years of age. He stated the abuse started after Roemele convinced him to stay with him after mass. There, he fondled his genitals over his clothes. This conduct escalated to exposing the boy's genitals and Roemele exposing his own genitals to the boy. The victim stated that Roemele would often fondle him with the goal of giving the boy an erection. Roemele sometimes squeezed the boy's testicles to the point where he experienced pain, but Roemele encouraged the boy to try to endure it. The victim estimated that the abuse occurred after every mass for approximately one year, if not longer, and lasted 20 to 30 minutes each time. The victim felt as though he had to appease Roemele while waiting for the abuse to stop.

The victim further outlined a particular instance when he went to the cabin with Roemele. Although Roemele told him that he would be going to the camp with other boys, it turned out that the victim was the only boy there. Upon arrival, Roemele instructed him to strip down to his underwear and shoot baskets at a hoop outside. Later, while in the cabin, Roemele began to fondle the victim, eventually removing the victim's clothes as well as his own. Roemele then placed the victim's hand on his erection and began masturbating himself using the victim's hand. Roemele asked him several times if he wanted to "taste it," but the victim declined. The victim reported that when he would try to pull back his hand, Roemele would put it back on his penis. The victim stated that despite him being visibly uncomfortable, the abuse by Roemele continued on and off again for six hours before he was finally taken home.

In another letter from a law firm, the attorney inquired if a list of four victims would be able to settle their cases with the Diocese. The second and third victims' names were included on this list. It is unknown whether any settlement was reached. In late, August 2008, the Diocese sent a letter to the Allegheny District Attorney's Office regarding their receipt of the allegations.

In late October 2010, the Diocese received a telephone call from a mother who reported that Roemele had sexually abused her son when he was 10 years old. She alleged that her son and others were molested by Roemele at St. Joseph. She stated that Roemele would have the boys come in early for mass or devotions and then molest them. He also took them to a cabin that she referred to as "*Mo's cabin.*" She went on to explain that her son had passed away in 2003 from complications from his alcoholism, adding that he began drinking in 1969 when he was just 10 years old.

In early November 2010, Diocesan officials met with the mother at her home. She stated that she believed her son would still be alive if not for the abuse he suffered by Roemele leading him to drink. The clergy staff offered to provide her with counseling services over the telephone since she was not able to leave her house. In July, 2011, the Diocese sent a letter to the Allegheny District Attorney's Office regarding their receipt of the victim's allegation. It was

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indicated that the reasons for the delay in the submittal was due to the fact that the Diocese was unsure whether the allegation needed to be reported since the victim was deceased.

Roemele took a leave of absence from his assignment on February 2, 1976. He later resigned from active ministry in early August, 1976 and was officially laicized on February 25, 1978.

In early February 2009, Diocesan officials met with Roemele and confronted him with the allegations from the second and third victims. Roemele responded that he did not recall the second victim by name but did recognize the third victim by name, along with two of the altar boys identified by the second victim. Roemele ultimately denied all the allegations of sexual abuse, stating that they likely misinterpreted his actions towards them as sexually abusive in nature when they were not meant that way. The clergy staff informed Roemele that as part of a new policy, his name and address would need to be provided to the District Attorney where he lived (Butler County) advising that a priest with allegations of sexual abuse was residing in the county. In the memorandum documenting the meeting, it was reported that Roemele seemed calm and lacked curiosity about the allegations presented to him. He had no questions and did not seem upset about the policy of providing his information to the Butler County District Attorney's Office.