

## Reverend James E. Somma, M.Ed.

### Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1934
YEAR OF DEATH:	2004
ORDINATION:	May 30, 1959

### Employment/Assignment History

7/10/1959 – 4/19/1964	Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ellwood City, PA
4/20/1964 – 5/04/1964	St. Pius V., McKeesport, PA
5/05/1964 – 6/21/1984	Archdiocese for Military Services, Washington, DC
6/22/1984 – 5/11/1985	St. Aloysius, Pittsburgh, PA
5/12/1985 – 1/08/1992	Nativity, Pittsburgh, PA
1/08/1992 – 2/07/1994	Holy Trinity, West Mifflin, PA
2/07/1994 – 2/07/2002	Forbes Regional Hospital- Monroeville & St. Michael, Pitcairn, PA

### Summary

In a handwritten letter dated September 17, 1986, Father Nicholas Dattilo stated that he spoke with a victim over the telephone. She claimed that a priest sexually abused her for seven years from age 11 ½ until age 18. She provided the priest's name, but the name was not provided in Dattilo's letter. The victim stated that she "*expressed concern that the priest was now a pastor and could be out there harming other children.*" When Dattilo spoke with Bishop Bosco and Nick Cafardi on the matter, Cafardi stated, "*until she gives her name, we have no credible evidence.*"

Dattilo and another priest subsequently met with Father James E. Somma following another telephone call from the victim in January, 1988. Dattilo concluded that Somma should not be removed from ministry based on his "*strong denial, sterling military career, the passage of time and the victim's admitted psychiatric treatment.*" According to handwritten notes dated February 18, 1988, Somma was evaluated at the St. Luke Institute. A portion of the notes stated, "*May need counseling from neuro-psycho rehabilitation person.*"

A March 8, 1988 evaluation report from St. Luke's recommended that children and adolescents not have free access to Somma's home given the present day sensitivity to priests' relationships with children.

On March 20, 2002, the victim sent a letter to Dattilo advising that she was in counseling, had obtained an attorney, and had filed a lawsuit. Articles from several newspapers do not provide her name, but report that Somma forced her to engage in oral sex and sexual intercourse with him until her late teens. The lawsuit was dismissed based upon the statute of limitations. Since then, she reported that she has been hospitalized for serious, clinical depression and

## Summary

attempted suicide twice. She requested a settlement of \$900,000 (\$20,000 per year since the beginning of her ordeal).

A second victim contacted the Diocese in a letter dated April 28, 2002. An adult male provided the following account of abuse:

*I'm not sure how I met Father James E. Somma (Lt. Col., USAF, Ret.), I can only remember that my mom helped him find the house that would later become my prison. When I would help out at his [Somma's] house, which was secluded from town and off the Air Force Base, he would treat me to dinner and movies and give me pocket money for doing chores when I was 13. This went on for the first few months, and then I would start spending the weekends at his place, spending the night there. I thought of him as a "father figure" who praised me, and all was pretty normal the first few months. Then I remember one night when we were coming home from somewhere that we stopped by his [Somma's] office to pick up some videos. I never thought anything of it, then when he played the tape I knew it was a XXX rated film. I don't think I said anything, I was thrilled, I mean all young kids dream about this stuff, and here I was getting it with someone I cared about. Someone who I felt knew what was my best interest, someone who has two adopted kids of his own.*

He explained that he watched these XXX movies while lying in bed with Somma, Somma placed his hands down his own pants and talked about masturbation or "wacking off." They fell asleep under the covers and Somma "cuddled him like a teddy bear." The second victim wrote, "I don't think I knew what was really happening at the time. Anyway I felt protected by him, and my parents trusted him and I knew they wouldn't let anyone harm me."

From 1984 until 1992, Somma had the second victim fly from Ludwig, Illinois to the Pittsburgh area. In the Pittsburgh area, Somma showed him pornography and talked about masturbation. He stated that Somma would explain that when he and his friends were younger, they would "jerk' each other off and stand around naked and see who could shoot the farthest load (while erect)." The second victim stated that he was sexually abused by Somma but not molested. The victim further advised that each time Somma visited his family in Illinois, he came with a different young boy. He specifically remembered three boys who looked like him, except for the color of their hair. He then wrote, "When I visited Pittsburgh [at Somma's expense] the same boys hung around the rectory with him." In addition, the second victim wrote, "I have not spoken to Father Somma in several years, I do remember him apologizing to me about the past, but I didn't want to talk about it, only that I felt in my heart that I forgave him."

In April 2000, the second victim was at the seminary and told Father Charles Bober about Somma's sexual abuse. Bober supported the victim and told him to inform the clergy office of the abuse, where it could be addressed. The second victim ultimately left the seminary and entered the military.

## Summary

In April of 2002, the Diocese referred the second victim's allegation to the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office.

Also on April 4, 2002, a note in the Diocesan records was made that stated that there was a conference call with the second victim and that the victim mentioned that he knew of a woman who came forward and Somma said, "*they didn't believe her, they won't believe you.*"

In May 2002, the Diocese offered to provide the second victim with financial assistance for counseling and provided him with the names and telephone numbers of several therapists.

By January 2009, the second victim had moved to Illinois and e-mailed the Diocese, asking for help with therapy. The Diocese offered to pay for his therapy. In October 2011, the victim had moved to California and again asked the Diocese for help. The Diocese provided him with the names of 16 therapists and offered to pay for the therapy. In June and September of 2012, the victim sent e-mail messages to the Diocese advising that he still had not seen a therapist. Again, the Diocese offered to help by giving him the name and telephone number of an assistance coordinator and offering financial assistance.

In a March 2002 telephone call and an April 2002 letter to the Diocese, a male claimed that Somma had sexual contact with him in 1983 when he was in seventh grade at Nativity, and then on and off from 1984 to 1992 in Pittsburgh. The contact started with tickling and progressed to Somma performing oral sex on the victim and forcing the victim to perform oral sex on Somma. The abuse allegedly happened at least once a week. Somma took the victim on numerous trips, bought him gifts, even a car. The victim reported that Somma also bought him pornography and offered to pay for a female prostitute. According to the victim, Somma threatened to kill his parents if he told anyone. The Diocese offered to assist with psychological and spiritual help. In May 2002, the Diocese gave the victim the names of several counselors and priests. The Diocese also offered to pay for therapy.

In July 2002, the Diocese referred the third victim's allegation to the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office.

Diocesan records also contained a letter dated December 14, 1988 wherein the Diocese informed Bishop Donald Wuerl about "*suspicious of Father Somma's misbehavior involving four named, potential male victims.*"