

Reverend Paul G. Spisak

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1944
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 5, 1973

Employment/Assignment History

5/22/1973-10/01/1978	St. Mary of the Mount, Pittsburgh, PA
10/02/1978-10/05/1980	St. Benedict the Abbot, McMurray, PA
10/06/1980-11/19/1981	Sacred Heart, Pittsburgh, PA
11/20/1981-6/29/1990	St. Dominic, Donora, PA
6/25/1988-6/29/1990	St. Charles, Donora, PA
6/30/1990-2/07/1994	St. Philip, Pittsburgh, PA
2/07/1994-2/12/1997	St. Andrew, Butler, PA
2/16/1998-10/26/1998	St. Mary, Cecil, PA
7/03/2000-7/11/2002	Chaplain Nursing Home, Allison Park, PA
7/03/2000-7/11/2002	Chaplain Nursing Home, Pittsburgh, PA
5/30/2003	Removed from ministry

Summary

In October 1998, parish staff from St. Dominic reported Father Paul G. Spisak to the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Parish staff had found pornographic magazines, tapes and internet material in Spisak's room that depicted homosexual and sadomasochistic activity. There were also several pictures of Spisak with two different underage boys including pictures of the boys showing their buttocks and pictures of Spisak pulling down his swim trunks and pulling down the boy's pants. According to the staff, Spisak allegedly destroyed these pictures of the boys. The staff estimated that the boys were 15 years old.

In October 1998, the Coordinator of Clergy Support Services for the Diocese met with a Diocesan employee. She stated that Spisak had written her a note that month wherein he indicated that he would be going to St. Luke Institute for evaluation but wanted to reassure her that he *"hadn't done anything wrong in the past or in the present."* The secretary advised that Spisak had always shown a particular interest in her son and had taken him on vacation many years earlier. She stated that she felt uncomfortable about the attention he gave her son and that her son would often leave their house and Spisak was expected to arrive.

Spisak was interviewed in October 1998 by the Diocese with respect to the pornography and pictures that were found. The records indicated that *"Spisak denied ever having any sexual contact with minors or adults"* but did admit that *"he has been struggling with the problem of viewing pornography for several years."* Further, he did admit to taking several young men of high school age on vacation with him during his time in Donora sometime between 1981 and

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1990. When asked about the photographs that were seen by the parish housekeeper, Spisak stated they were taken years ago during these vacations and that the photographs were very innocent and “*just for fun.*”

In a letter from the Diocese to Wuerl pertaining to Spisak’s evaluation dated November 10, 1998, the findings were recounted as follows:

1. *Spisak has both sexual and interpersonal issues that are significant enough to warrant residential treatment;*
2. *Spisak was diagnosed as having a sexual disorder that is compulsive in nature and is currently manifested in his use of porn;*
3. *Some of the testing identified Spisak shows a “significant interest in grade school age males” and his interest in one of the boys pictured in a photo found in the rectory began when the boy was in 7th or 8th grade.*

In a letter dated April 23, 1999, Father Ruggiero wrote to the Diocesan employee’s son and requested to meet with him to discuss disturbing information that his mother had provided to the church “*concerning a priest of the Diocese.*” Ruggiero stated in the letter, “*I am sure revisiting these painful memories is not easy for you . . . I can only imagine how difficult it must have been to discuss this with your mother.*”

A June 21, 1999 letter was sent from Flaherty to Wuerl regarding a meeting with Spisak at St. Luke:

While Spisak has been vague about the extent of his past involvement with [the victim], he has been able to acknowledge the sexual motivation in this relationship. Spisak has also acknowledged a sexual attraction to minors as well as to adult men. Spisak will need to continue to develop both internal & external resources to control his emotional impulsivity and his tendency to isolate himself. Without such control, Spisak is at risk to act out his problematic behavior again (i.e. use of pornography, compulsive masturbation and possible sexual activity either with minors or adults).

In July 1999, Wuerl assigned Spisak to residence at St. Mary of Mercy to assist with certain duties in the care of the parish.

On October 15, 2017, Diocesan officials wrote to Wuerl about a request made by Spisak to expand his “*ministerial functions;*” specifically “*to be able to hear confessions during the penance services that routinely occur during Advent and Lent.*” The letter stated that Spisak “*has done well in his recovery.*” The following recommendations were suggested: That Spisak continue his current assignment as chaplain to the patients of Vincentian Home and Regency Hall and continue in residence at St. Alexis with “*limited involvement in sacramental work within the parish at the discretion of the pastor.*” The other recommendations listed were that Spisak be permitted to hear confessions only during Advent and Lent in the parishes of St. Alexis, St. Alphonsus, Sts John and Paul and St. John Neumann.

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On May 24, 2002, a memorandum was sent to the Diocese from Sister Margaret. It included a letter from a psychotherapist to Wuerl. The psychotherapist reported that he had been Spisak's psychotherapist for almost two years and was writing with hope that "*Father Spisak's priestly ministry can be reestablished in the future.*" The psychotherapist went on to say:

[A]llegations of inappropriate sexual contact with a young man who was mentored by Spisak are not only unsubstantiated, but also not highly credible. As a friend of the family, Spisak knew [X], the man who made the allegations, from his infancy . . . The alleged inappropriate contact occurred when Spisak, [X] and [others] went on a trip to the shore. The allegations were made 15 years after the trip, after [X] was told by his mother that Spisak was in treatment at St. Luke's. Upon questioning, [X] described possible fondling by Spisak while they were both in bed fully clothed. No one from the church spoke directly to [X] or [others]. Spisak's memory is quite clear . . . he strongly asserts his behavior with young men was always proper.

It should be noted that no information regarding this fondling incident was given to the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General.

In July 9, 2002, Spisak requested to withdraw from active priestly ministry for personal reasons.

On May 9, 2003, Wuerl sent a letter to Spisak stating:

In light of allegations of sexual abuse of a minor which are deemed to be established . . . and in consideration of the pastoral needs of the faithful and the scandal which arises regarding the assignment of a priest to any form of ministry who has been involved with sexual abuse of a minor, the judgment has been made that your ministry would be ineffectual and possibly harmful . . . You are prohibited from performing any public celebration of the sacraments or sacramental, from wearing clerical attire, presenting yourself as a priest in good standing or as a representative of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

On May 15, 2006, Wuerl was advised via letter of the arrest of Spisak. Spisak pled guilty to a disorderly conduct charge and had to pay a \$300.00 fine. Spisak was also required to "*provide a letter from his therapist verifying that he is still in therapy dealing with the sexual difficulties that have been a part of his life.*" No further information regarding this issue was provided by the Diocese.

In June 2017, Special Agents in the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General obtained the police reports from Upper St. Clair Police Department regarding the arrest of Spisak. The reports revealed that on April 21, 2006, police responded to the South Hills Village Mall for a complaint in a first floor men's bathroom. A male reported while in the men's bathroom stall,

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he observed a camera recording him from the rear corner of his stall. The camera was protruding through the opening of the stall and was being recorded by Spisak. When initially approached by mall security, Spisak denied having a camera. Spisak then faked that he was ill and ran into the bathroom. A security guard followed Spisak and saw him flush the memory card from the camera down the toilet.

On April 26, 2017, Spisak arrived at the police station for further questioning. He admitted to having the camera, recording the victim in the stall and then flushing the memory card. Spisak also admitted to police that he had a “*sexual fixation with the male buttocks.*”