

# Wheat Ridge man says fear, shame put lid on his ordeal at hands of priest

By Katie Kerwin

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**WHEAT RIDGE** — Until last week, Mike Sandoval never told anyone why he suddenly stopped being an altar boy at his New Mexico Catholic church 20 years ago.

Now 30 and living in Wheat Ridge, Sandoval said a priest forced him to perform oral sex in the church after Mass one day when he was 11 years old.

"I felt scared and ashamed," he said. Sandoval avoided church from that day on. "But I didn't tell my dad until yesterday."

Sandoval says the man who assaulted him was the Rev. David Holley, a 65-year-old retired Catholic priest in Denver. At the time, Holley was an assistant pastor at St. Jude Mission Catholic Church in Alamogordo, N.M., where Sandoval's father still attends church today.

Publicity about two other men filing suit against Holley for allegedly molesting them as boys spurred Sandoval to come forward.

He is not alone.

Since the suit was filed Wednesday, 16 other men from Massachusetts, Colorado, Texas and New Mexico have come forward alleging sexual abuse by Holley, according to Albuquerque attorney Bruce



Glenn Asakawa/Rocky Mountain News

Mike Sandoval, 30, of Wheat Ridge says he was abused sexually nearly 20 years ago while an altar boy for the Rev. David Holley.

Pasternack.

"We have five sets of brothers who never told each other before," he said.

The scenario was often the same, Pasternack claims: Holley would assault boys in the church sacristy or draw them to his house to mow the lawn, see pornography or meet girls.

Pasternack is now seeking unspecified damages for his clients. He is pressuring the church to settle with him now or face a raft of new lawsuits with new victims

who have come forward.

Holley, who has been summoned to his home diocese in Worcester, Mass., since the accusations surfaced, has refused to discuss specific charges.

The Otero County district attorney's office in New Mexico has launched a criminal investigation.

Holley began his career in Massachusetts in 1958. He worked in schools and parishes in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania until 1971,

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when the suit alleges his superiors sent him to the Servants of the Paraclete, a treatment center for troubled priests in northern New Mexico. Lawyers allege Holley was treated for pedophilia there and was then sent to work in parishes in New Mexico and later throughout the Southwest.

After working in Alamogordo, Holley served in McCamey, Garden City and Amarillo, all in Texas. Then he worked as a chaplain at St. Joseph's Hospital in Albuquerque and St. Anthony Hospital Central in Denver before retiring in 1988.

Sandoval said he came forward to jolt the church into dealing with aberrant priests, not to get revenge.

"It's more to wake the church up," said Sandoval, a snowplow driver and the father of four girls.

Sandoval's father was from Alamogordo and in the Air Force. From 1972 to 1975, the family was stationed there and active at St. Jude's.

Sandoval, an altar boy since first grade, said he was in the sixth grade when he had his first encounter with Holley.

"He wanted me and another altar boy to stay after the 12 o'clock Mass, to help out at the church, restock and stuff. I did that. We went to the back room. We changed out of our garments. Then Father Holley asked us to reach into his pockets and get some quarters out," Sandoval recalled.

He said Holley told him how good it felt. The boys didn't think much of it and left.

Then about a month later, Sandoval was by himself after Mass with Holley.

"We went to the back room, and he forced me to have oral sex with him. It started with the quarters again.

"It really freaked me out. I had been an altar boy for years. And I didn't think anything like that could happen," he said. "I kind of felt let down with the Catholic religion."

Sandoval didn't tell anyone.

"My dad was a pretty strict

Catholic guy. They always taught us priests are your friends. If you have a problem, go to the priest."

Then he read newspaper accounts of accusations against Holley.

Sandoval called his father, who was upset that he had never told him.

Sandoval said he feels sweaty and nervous when he talks about the encounters. But he believes in talking about it.

"I would never have said anything if those two other guys hadn't come forward."