

Accuser ends silence about alleged sexual abuse

By George B. Griffin
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Barry Navin says he remained silent for years about sexual abuse he allegedly suffered at the hands of the Rev. David A. Holley.

For a long time, he thought the matter was best left in the past.

But Navin, 38, said in an interview he decided to come forward because too many people, especially those in authority at the Roman Catholic Diocese of Worcester, have tried to ignore the problem of sexual abuse by priests.

"I want to take what happened to me and use it as an opportunity for growth," said Navin, who lives in Worcester.

He said the abuse allegedly began in 1966, when he was 10 years old and a member of St. Mary of the Hills Church in Boylston, and continued until Holley left the parish two years later.

Navin is one of four men who filed suit recently in Boston against the Worcester diocese. The lawsuit contends that diocesan officials knew Holley was a pedophile and were negligent in failing to protect the plaintiffs from sexual abuse when they were children.

It is one of a string of similar court actions in which alleged victims are seeking financial damages.

Holley, who was ordained in the

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BARRY NAVIN

Worcester diocese in 1958, served at St. Mary of the Hills and several other area churches, including St. Denis Church in East Douglas, St. Philip's Church in Grafton and Our Lady of Fatima Church in Worcester.

SENT FOR TREATMENT

The diocese sent him to Jemez Springs, N.M., in 1972 to receive psychiatric treatment for pedophilia at a center run by a religious order called Servants of the Paraclete. Holley pleaded guilty last month in New Mexico to charges relating to a number of child sexual assaults in parishes in that state.

Navin said that when he was growing up, he was encouraged to become active in the church by his father, a devout Catholic.

"I was baptized in St. Mary of the Hills," Navin said. "I took my First Communion there. I was involved in a lot of things — catechism, CYC. I got to know Holley at church and he started calling up our house and asking my parents if my brother and myself could go down to the church and set up chairs, help out

and things like that."

Navin said Holley contrived to separate him from other youths who were performing chores at the church or rectory. The first instance of alleged sexual abuse occurred during one such work period, he said, after he and his brother had been asked to come to the church to work.

"He had my brother in one part of the church doing something and he had me in his bedroom dusting his bedroom furniture," Navin said. "He came in and shut the door and told me to go sit down on the bed. He said he wanted to talk to me about something.

"That was the first time it happened," he said. "We ended up having oral sex that afternoon."

Navin said he remembers little about the rest of that day, just "my brother dragging me home."

FREQUENT ASSAULTS

After a while the sexual assaults became frequent, Navin alleged. While they were going on, he said, Holley would tell him that he was

an evil person and that this evil was the cause of the assaults.

Navin said he became so confused by what was occurring that he had no idea how to stop what was happening.

"When you're brought up Irish Catholic, the church, priests, nuns are everything," he said. "I was intimidated and scared. I was in denial."

Navin said Holley "insisted I was bad, that there was something wrong with me and that was why this was happening.

"He sent me conflicting messages. One minute, he was telling me how beautiful I was and the next, how bad I was. He implied that if I told, something very tragic would happen."

Navin said Holley also arranged to hold him out to other men for sex.

"There was one weekend where we went on a weekend retreat for Catholic youths," Navin said. "I just thought it was going to be a church weekend. We got to the monastery in the afternoon and I remember eating dinner and then we all went to bed. Part way through the night, Holley woke me up and said I had to go to the bathroom. I thought that was strange, but I was groggy and half asleep.

"He brought me into a large bathroom, where there were four or five priests in there. I had to perform oral sex on every single one of them."

Navin said Holley left the church abruptly in 1968.

He said the abuse left him with skewed emotions and feelings of isolation, anger, guilt and shame.

"I shut down emotionally," Navin said. "I stopped growing at 10. I learned skills to survive, to become what anyone wanted me to be."

PARENTS AFFECTED

Navin said his parents are having trouble coming to grips with what happened to him.

"My mom is having a real difficult time with it," he said. "My dad is feeling a lot of guilt and anger. It's hard for my mother, but it also is a period of discovery for her. She is realizing now why I acted the way that I did growing up."

Navin, who described himself as a "very spiritual person," has abandoned the church. "There's no place for religion in my life," he said.

He said he hoped his story would help others protect their children.

"Trust your child's vulnerability to no one at any time," Navin said. "Absolutely no one."