

Scroll down to next page to view exhibit.

[REDACTED] Road
Arlington, Virginia 22204

March 8, 1994

Most Reverend Edward M. Egan, J.C.D., D.D.
Bishop of Bridgeport
Catholic Center
238 Jewett Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06606-2892

Your Excellency:

I am writing to you because I am a victim of childhood sexual abuse by a priest of your Diocese and I need your help. For all of my adult life I have struggled with depression and all the feelings of low self-esteem and unhappiness that go with it. Having turned twenty-nine this past year, I have decided to get to the bottom of this depression and deal with it once and for all.

Never fully understanding the nature of pedophilia and its effects, I had for years downplayed the role this victimization has played in my life. I can no longer do that if I am ever to live a happy and fulfilling life.

The priest I refer to is Fr. Walter P. Coleman. and I will give you the history of our relationship.

When Fr. Coleman came to St. Patrick Church in Bridgeport, I was in the 6th grade. I was a dedicated altar boy at the time and loved to serve Mass and be around the parish. Fr. Coleman allowed me to spend more and more time at the parish and in the rectory.

By the time I had reached the 8th grade I had been "befathered" by Fr. Coleman. At the time, my father was an unrecovered alcoholic and my parents were going through a painful divorce which deeply affected me. The rectory became my substitute home-- my refuge-- and Fr. Coleman and St. Patrick's became, for all intents and purposes, my family.

The sexual abuse began when I was in either the 8th or 9th grade. At various times when I was alone with Fr Coleman he would put his hands down my pants and fondle my genitals. I remember that each time it occurred I would feel very uncomfortable. I would grind my teeth and think in my youthful imagination that if I concentrated hard enough he would stop. I was always afraid that Fr. Bill Sangiovanni, the associate pastor, or Msgr Jean Tetreault, then the Chancellor of the Diocese in residence, or the housekeeper, Hannah O'Shea living there at the time, would walk in. I did not know what to say to let him know how uncomfortable his actions made me feel. He was at the time my best friend and in many ways a benefactor to me.

Fr. Coleman once told me that my mother had said to him that her marriage counselor suggested that the reason I might, at times, be unruly at home was because I probably did not masturbate. I used this story to help me rationalize his behavior. For years I told myself that he was fondling my genitals to help me. My mother denies any recollection of ever discussing masturbation with Fr. Coleman.

What may be more tragic than the sexual inappropriateness of Fr. Coleman's behavior is the bond he built between the two of us and the way he severed it most abruptly.

There are countless people and several priests in your Diocese that can attest that I was a "regular" in the rectory and that I was very close to Fr. Coleman. He was my only friend at the time outside of the my peers at school. He took me to an ordination in Rome where we stayed at the North American College. He took me to Florida to visit his mother and to Disney World. Apart from the fondling of my genitals, which I clearly remember happening even on those trips, he treated me very well.

I did not come from a poor family. My father was a [REDACTED] and my mother a [REDACTED] in Bridgeport. I never went without. However, Fr. Coleman treated me far better than my parents could. For example, he would take me to nice restaurants. He would buy me clothes. In Florida, I remember he lavished me with gifts such as diving masks and fins and even bought me a raft. There were the times in the summer he would take me on his boat. I was there when he bought a Jaguar and was even able to convince him to let me drive it the night before he was trading it in for another.

I, a troubled boy one whose family was going through rough times, was made to feel very special by Fr. Coleman. And I always did feel special because he was my friend. I went to the parish school, I was an altar boy and I was a "special" friend with the pastor. I even became close to his dog, Erica, who came to St. Patrick's as a puppy. I spent so much time around her and Fr. Coleman that I was one of the few people she wouldn't bark at -- or bite for that matter. The principal of my grammar school, who at the time was Sr. Mary Dennis, knew that I was a close companion of Fr. Coleman's. She once called me out of class, brought me into an office where she gave me something to eat and asked me petty questions about his whereabouts and his car missing from the garage and things of that nature.

All of this ended in one day during my junior year of high school at Notre Dame. It so happened that Fr. Coleman's associate pastor, Fr. Sangiovanni, was also the spiritual counselor at Notre Dame. I sensed that there was some tension in their relationship and I mentioned this to Fr. Bill in passing. Fr. Bill later asked me more about my thoughts on the tension between himself and the pastor. All I could tell him was that I had been present at a conversation where the pastor told a woman at the parish that there was some disagreement over the annual Italian festival at St. Patrick's. I knew nothing more and, to this day, still do not.

Later when Fr. Coleman heard that I had spoken with Fr. Bill he came to question me about it. I told him exactly what I had said. Fr. Coleman told me then and there that I was no longer welcome in the rectory. I left very shaken and devastated.

As I look back as an adult, it was the most traumatic incident in my life and one that I later was to repress. I was so devastated I remember skipping school one day and driving up to Ridgefield to talk with a priest who had spent a summer as deacon at the parish. I was so devastated by Fr. Coleman's sexual abuse and rejection I never told my parents or anyone that I was no longer welcomed there. I came up with excuses as to why I was no longer visiting Fr. Coleman. To this day my grandmother asks me why I never call or visit him because, as she says, he was always so good to me.

It is because of these events that I believe I am and have been since high school suffering from depression. Family members can tell you the hours I spent sleeping in my room during this period. I, and others who have supported me, can tell you of the bouts of depression I had and the difficult struggle I had to get through Catholic University of America despite being told I had the capacity of getting A's. Indeed, things were so difficult for me that I took a year off from studies. I am still trying to sort out the consequences of Fr. Coleman's abusive relationship with me.

What is fair compensation for years of depression and handicapped education and employment? Each year of school and work has been a struggle for me. Despite my intelligence and talents, the depression and pain with which I have lived for the last thirteen years have made it impossible for me to actualize the potential of my God-given gifts.

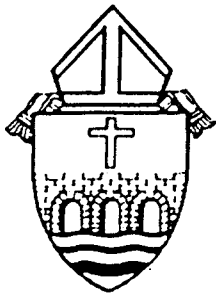
My immediate need is to get therapy. It is well documented that childhood sexual abuse is a factor in depression. For now, I have been directed to St. Luke's Institute in Suitland, Maryland for treatment since they specialize in this area and will treat me within a Catholic framework. Although they are willing to treat me, my health benefits will not cover treatment at this facility. I feel that I both need and deserve your help in this regard.

Your Excellency, it is very painful for me to write this letter. I would welcome the opportunity to be able to discuss the matter with you at your convenience. Please understand the urgency of my request. It has taken me thirteen years to come to this life-changing decision to finally deal with the matter of sexual abuse at the hands of Fr. Coleman.

I can be reached at my office in Washington, DC at 202-██████████ -- or at my home 703-██████████.

Sincerely yours,

████████████████████
M-020



DIOCESE of BRIDGEPORT

CONFIDENTIAL
SUBJECT TO COURT ORDER

OFFICE OF
CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

March 23, 1994

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Memorandum

To: Sexual Misconduct Report File of Fr. Coleman
From: Msgr. Bronkiewicz *L.R.T.*

On March 21, 1994, I made telephone contact with Mr. M-020, the accuser of Father Coleman, and with Reverend Andrew Ciferni, O.Praem., with whom Mr. M-020 had shared the allegation.

I informed each that I had written to Mr. M-020 on behalf of the Diocese in a letter, dated March 16, 1994.

Mr. M-020, who, by now, has received my letter, seemed very open to coming up to Bridgeport to further discuss the contents of his letter.

Today I informed Attorney Sweeney of my contact with Mr. M-020 and Father Ciferni.

Father Ciferni indicated that he has had a pastoral counseling relationship with Mr. M-020 whom he describes as a good man who is very involved with the Church. It was Ciferni who recommended to M-020 that he seek help at Saint Luke Institute in Suitland, Maryland. Father Ciferni said that M-020 has suffered from depression in connection with the alleged misconduct. Father Ciferni met M-020 at the Melkite Rite Parish in Maclean, Virginia where he helps on weekends - Holy Transfiguration Parish. Ciferni indicated that although M-020 was brought up in the Latin Rite he attends ~~at~~ Mass at the Melkite Parish.
[redacted in file as released]