



Phil Saviano

Thou shalt not...

P

hil Saviano, like so many of the other victims, was just a kid when his East Douglas parish priest sexually assaulted him.

The Rev. David Holley, who is now an old man and a convicted pedophile doing time in

a New Mexico prison, cut a wide swath through many different parishes — here and in three other states.

Saviano turned out to be just one man in a room crowded with Holley victims.

Holley came to the Worcester Diocese in 1962 from the Benedictine monks. He served in parishes in Grafton, East Douglas, Southboro, Worcester and Boylston. He was incardinated here in 1967, which means he took a vow of obedience to the bishop of the Worcester Diocese. While in this diocese, he received therapy on several occasions for his problem, but it apparently did not help, because Father Holley, who stands out among priestly abusers, picked up where he left off when he was transferred to parishes in New Mexico, Texas and Colorado.

In 1993, he was sentenced to 275 years in prison after pleading guilty to the sexual assault and aggravated sodomy of eight boys. With his record sentence, he eclipsed the dubious stature of the Rev. James Porter, a Massachusetts priest who served in the Fall River/New Bedford/Attleboro area and who accumulated victims of both sexes during his tenure in those posts. The former Father Porter, who left the priesthood and married, is also doing time. In 1993, he pleaded guilty to 41 charges of sexual assault.

"Holley's case came up just after the Porter case," said Saviano, who at 45 is the regional coordinator of the New England chapter of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests). SNAP is a national organization that was formed in Chicago.

"I think a lot of people felt that the Porter case was sensational, that it was an aberration," Saviano said. "The Holley case, I think, was the first one after that to get na-

But some

priests did —

and the church

didn't want to know

By Ellen O'Connor

tional attention."

Holley still doesn't understand why he's in jail, if his letters are any indication as to his state of mind.

"I don't think he has any idea — at least on a conscious level — of the havoc he has caused in people's lives," said Saviano, who now makes his home in Jamaica Plain. "And I don't think he feels he should be in prison."

Holley believes he is in jail because someone did wrong by him.

"I have been sadly disillusioned by the legal justice system," Holley wrote, in a letter to Saviano. "I mistakenly took bad advice from an inexperienced and incompetent public defender who strongly advised me to plead guilty to avoid the publicity of a trial."

But Holley's problem is probably his pedophilia, not his lawyer.

"I think he was very surprised that he got such a stiff sentence," said Saviano. "But I think from the judge's point of view, he had such a long history of sexual abuse and he had never been able to show any ability to control his sexual urges. I think the judge decided the only way this guy was going to stop molesting kids was to get him off the streets. The other thing was that in the diocese in New Mexico, there had been a whole string of similar cases, including the bishop himself. Holley's was the first to come to trial. I think the judge was making a statement

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Hall of Shame

Here are some of the names of the priests who have been charged with sexual abuse of children in the Worcester Diocese since 1986. Some are still in the diocese, some have been removed from the diocese, and some have died.

- **Rev. Robert Kelley** — 1990, sentenced to five to seven years in state prison for leading a group of young boys in a rape of a girl. Kelley, who was removed from the diocese in 1986, was later found guilty of the same crime with a different victim.
- **Rev. Ronald Provost** — 1993, given a 10-year suspended sentence for taking nude photographs of a 10-year-old boy.
- **Rev. William Stoppard** — 1993, sentenced to a sexual-abuse law suit. Father Stoppard died in 1995. The suit was eventually dismissed.
- **Rev. Thomas Kane** — 1993, defendant in a sexual-abuse lawsuit.
- **Rev. David Holley** — 1993, sentenced to 2 1/2 years in state prison for leading a group of boys to charges of sexually abusing eight boys.
- **Rev. Victor Brobas** — 1993, indicted on several charges, including rape. He died before the case came to trial.
- **Brother Antonio Antonucci** — 1993, charged with indecent assault and battery. He was found not guilty.
- **Rev. Brendan O'Donoghue** — 1994, defendant in a sexual-abuse lawsuit.
- **Rev. Peter Inzerillo** — 1994, defendant in a sexual-abuse lawsuit.
- **Rev. Brian Ares** — 1994, charged with indecent assault and battery. A mistrial was declared on a charge of indecent assault and battery. He was acquitted on a rape charge.
- **Rev. Thaddeus Kardas** — 1995, defendant in a sexual-abuse lawsuit.
- **Rev. Joseph Fredette** — 1995, convicted on sexual-assault charges involving young boys, sentenced to four to five years in state prison.
- **Rev. Thomas Teczar** — 1996, defendant in a sexual-abuse lawsuit.

— Compiled by Ellen O'Connor

Thou shalt not ...

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with his sentence.”
Saviano was just 11 years old when Holley, a priest at St. Denis Catholic Church, focused his attention on him. He was about 13 when the abuse ended at the time that Holley was transferred to another parish within the diocese.

“It was before I went through puberty, and some of it was pretty gruesome,” said Saviano, who filed a civil suit against Holley with several other area men. He settled out of court in May 1996, but did not sign a gag order, as many others have, which would have prevented him from speaking about his case.

“Unlike a lot of kids, I always remembered what happened,” Saviano said. “But I always just thought it was sort of a very unique and bizarre situation. It never occurred to me that it was something other victims had experienced as well.”

It was. Holley had a multitude of victims during his 30-some-odd-years as a ministering priest, many of the boys victimized again and again.

The sexual contact was a very difficult thing for the young and religious Saviano to deal with. He was old enough and aware enough of right and wrong to know that something certainly was amiss.

“I knew what was going on wasn't right, but I couldn't figure out if it was sinful or not,” Saviano said. “In those days I remember being

aware of what all the commandments were. I used to go to confession to try to figure out, ‘All right, what category does this fall under?’ And the thing was, Holley was the guy I went to confess to. And that, I think, is where my crisis of faith began, with that dilemma.”

“Was this sinful or not? And if it was, how could it be, if it was happening with a priest? ... Yet if it was a sin and I didn't confess it and I got run over by a school bus, would I go to hell?”

Anyone brought up Catholic knows the guilt associated with sinning — the small sins and the big. How does a child deal with the concept of violating God's commandments with a man who is supposed to be God's representative here on earth? Saviano handled confessing to his abuser as best he could.

“Whatever my other sins were, I would say, ‘I yelled at my mother. I said a swear word.’ I would end it with, ‘And you know the rest.’ I figured that was sort of a middle ground.”

When Saviano was finished, Holley would decide his penance — so many “Hail Marys,” so many “Our Fathers” to be said at the altar. But the one big sin, the one that involved the confessor himself, was left unspoken.

“He never really addressed that issue,” Saviano said.

In recent years, it has become a sad ritual to read about sexual abuse of some kind being perpetrated by priests, not only in the Worcester Diocese, but in dioceses all across the country. Adult men and women filed lawsuits claiming they had been abused as children during the 1960s and '70s.

Priests have been sent to prison for their crimes. Worcester is no exception. Thirteen Catholic clergy have been charged either civilly or criminally with sexually related crimes in the Worcester Diocese since 1986.

The Rev. Robert Kelley, among the first to make the news, was sentenced in 1990 to five to seven years in state prison for the unnatural rape of a female child. Released from prison, he is a defendant in a civil suit filed in 1995 that alleges the same crimes, but with a different victim. The alleged rape and assaults, which involved a then-4-year-old girl, were said to have occurred in 1968, when Kelley was a priest in Gardner.

Back in 1990, the *Telegram & Gazette* was roundly criticized for running a front-page photograph and story

about the fallen priest, but the Kelley story, unfortunately, was the first of many to follow. At the time, however, at least 100 priests from the diocese signed a letter to the editor, expressing outrage at the editorial decision to splash the story and photo across the front page.

There was plenty of outrage to go around. Victims were outraged at what they maintained was the lack of a compassionate church response — sometimes, the lack of any response at all — to a problem that placed the children

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— Phil Saviano on being abused by the Rev. David Holley

of the Catholic Church at risk. Catholics were outraged that such a thing could happen in their church, that a trusted parish priest could actually be a sexual predator, that sometimes the church's solution seemed to be to shuttle that priest from one parish to the next, that the paramount concern of the church seemed to be to keep the matter quiet and to close ranks to protect its own.

Along with the outrage was a feeling of betrayal. It seemed that the church was protecting these men, that the veracity of the victims was often doubted, that nothing was being done to address the problem and that no one was safe.

It was as if the priesthood had become some kind of enclave for those with sexual problems. In 1993, the Rev. Andrew Greeley, a Catholic priest, author and sociologist, estimated there might be more than 100,000 victims and as many as 2,000 to 4,000 abuser priests across the country. At the time, the U.S. population of priests was 53,000.

According to David Clohessy of St. Louis, who is the national director of SNAP, approximately 600 priests have been charged either criminally or civilly or removed by their bishops because of allegations of sexual abuse.

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Dave Lewison

caught or admitted," said Clohessy. "Church officials say 1 percent of priests [are sexual abusers]; others say 10 percent," he said. "I feel it is somewhere in between. I think what is important to remember is whether the number is 4 percent or 5 percent, the average priest who molests does it longer, gets by longer and has more victims than the average layperson does."

Other Catholics, priests included, were outraged at the news coverage. They felt priests were being unfairly singled out in a public airing of a very private, and, they believed, a very rare problem. They felt the vast majority of priests were good, holy men who were being unjustly painted with the same broad, tainted brush. Priests with problems were dealt with

the best way the bishops knew how at the time — they were sent on retreat for prayer and reflection or sent for therapy. Priests like David Holley and James Porter were anomalies: pedophiles with voracious sexual appetites who obviously could not be helped, even with therapy. Their illness made them do reprehensible things, but they were not at all representative of the many good priests who ministered to their flocks day in and day out, whose ministry was being hurt by these allegations.

There was a sense of betrayal there, too — a bishop betrayed by his own priest. All the good priests betrayed by the acts of one man, who had brought shame to the diocese and hurt to the victims. For many years, the problem had been

quietly dealt with behind closed doors. Pedophilia was not talked about; not much was known about it. Therapy might help, but could it be controlled? Could it be cured? Some don't believe it is a curable illness.

But during the '90s, the problem that afflicts people of all professions and all walks of life was out in the open, for better or for worse.

One of the things that has stuck in Ed Gagne's mind all these years is the cold response he got from Bishop Bernard Flanagan. Gagne, a 13-year-old altar boy from Spencer, told Flanagan he had been sexually molested by his parish priest, the Rev. Brendan O'Donoghue of Our Lady of the Rosary. The incident was alleged to have occurred during the summer of 1978.

"I will never forget the moment when I was sitting with Bishop Flanagan in his office, first with my parents, and then me alone, when I told him about what Father O'Donoghue did to me," said Gagne, now 32.

"Bishop Flanagan's words, repeated more than once to me were, 'You must never tell anyone. The church will take care of this.' I will never forget those words. What is even more difficult is this could have been prevented because Rev. O'Donoghue had complaints against him prior to mine."

Gagne filed a civil suit in 1994 against O'Donoghue, the Rev. Peter Inzerillo, retired Bishop Flanagan and retired Bishop Timothy Harrington, who is now deceased. The suit is still pending in Worcester Superior Court. Originally scheduled to begin Sept. 15, the trial has been postponed and the parties are awaiting a new date.

"I've never received an apology," Gagne said. "I've never received an 'I'm sorry.' I've never received any help whatsoever. I was left to deal with this on my own. There was a complete lack of concern for me and my family."

It is the policy of the diocese not to comment on pending cases, nor to make people involved in a case available for comment, according to diocesan spokesman Raymond Delisle.

Gagne, a soft-spoken, thoughtful person, had wanted to make the priesthood his life. He continued to pursue that idea, despite what he says happened to him in O'Donoghue's bedroom in the rectory of Our Lady of the Rosary all those years ago.

The devout young man began the process of entering the seminary. It was then that he says he was sexually assaulted again, this time by Rev. Inzerillo, who was counseling Gagne. At the time, Inzerillo was vocation director for the Worcester diocese.

Gagne says Inzerillo preyed upon him

"at his weakest moments" and initiated unwanted sexual advances.

"There was a lot of subtle sexual seduction," said Gagne of the alleged 1985 incidents.

According to court records, Inzerillo allegedly exploited his professional relationship with Gagne for "personal gain and advantage" and coerced him into performing nonconsensual sexual acts during therapy sessions.

Inzerillo, who is on administrative leave, and O'Donoghue, who is retired, have denied the allegations in court records. When priests are placed on administrative leave, they cannot perform any priestly functions for the diocese, according to Delisle. Their lawyers, Paul O'Connor and Thomas Farrey III, respectively, did not wish to comment on the pending case.

Bishop Daniel Reilly, who was named to replace Bishop Harrington in 1994, declined to comment, though he did agree to talk off the record about the issues surrounding this story.

Attorney James Reardon, of the Worcester law firm of Reardon & Reardon, has represented the diocese on many occasions. He did not wish to be interviewed either, but did issue a written statement.

"Over the past several years, there have been a number of serious allegations made against certain priests within the diocese of Worcester," Reardon wrote. "These allegations have involved a small number of clergy serving the Worcester diocese. In each instance, an individual is expected to respond to such allegations independently of the diocese."

"At times, allegations have been made against former bishops of the diocese in their representative capacity. One of these is deceased and one is of advanced age and infirm health. Many of the allegations concern events that are said to have occurred many years ago, sometimes as much as 25 or 30 years past."

"There is no doubt that the diocese and its former bishops may present an inviting target when one might assume that individual priests may not have the financial ability to respond to allegations of this nature. While the diocese does not question anyone's right to have allegations considered by a judge or jury, it also believes that its bishops and the diocese itself should not be faulted for responding vigorously in defense of such allegations."

Reardon went on to say that the diocese has taken steps to respond to complaints of this nature and those steps have varied as knowledge in the treatment of "psychological infirmities" has advanced and changed.

"Reasonable steps have been and are instituted to meet the challenge of isolat-

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ed events and changing circumstances," he wrote. "The diocese has been and continues to be concerned for the spiritual well-being of all persons in the Worcester diocese. No allegation or court of law can change this commitment of the diocese, its former bishops and, most assuredly, Bishop Daniel Reilly."

But Gagne's experience has not left him. Nor is it likely to any time soon.

"I never realized until recently, through therapy, how much this has affected my life," said Gagne. "I question people who abuse power. I question God. I question humanity. For years, I have lived with the belief that if men of God can do this to me, anything is possible."

Gagne gave up his dream of becoming a priest. "I lost my faith," he said.

Dave Lewcon also had a crisis of faith.

Lewcon filed suit against the church and the Rev. Thomas Teczar in 1996. Father Teczar is alleged to have sexually assaulted Lewcon when he was 16 years old and a parishioner at St. Mary's of Uxbridge. Lewcon, 43, now lives in Webster. Teczar is on administrative leave. His lawyer, Thomas Wilcox of Worcester, did not wish to comment.

"Teczar was very gregarious, fun-loving, very popular with young people in the parish," said Lewcon. "The parish was very shut down emotionally, I always thought. He was just the opposite. He would give hugs and kisses to anyone who would receive them. We started palling around."

Teczar would try to get Lewcon to refer to him by his given name, Tom, rather than by his formal name of Father Teczar. He would talk to Lewcon about how "up-tight a kid he was."

He offered to give the teenager a back rub to loosen up his shoulders. Lewcon said the idea made him uncomfortable.

"But he had a way of getting you over different roadblocks," said Lewcon. "He gave me some alcohol. It was with the back rubs that there was sexual abuse. Basically, he would start with the back and work his way down and around."

There were a number of abusive experiences, according to court records. One incident in particular stands out in Lewcon's mind. He was invited to attend a party at Teczar's parents' house on Cape Cod. Lewcon got drunk. He also got stoned for the first time in his life. Later that night, he said, he awoke to find himself being sexually abused by Teczar.

"I really didn't have that many friends as a kid," Lewcon said. His religion made up a big part of his life.

"I was a very good Catholic and I felt like that had been taken away. ... My losing faith created a void in my life."

As a young, college-age adult, he threw himself headfirst into the religion of Christian Science, which he studied for about 10 years.

"Obviously, I was trying to replace what I had lost," he said.

The victims want to know: How could the church simply transfer "problem priests" from one diocese to the next, where other children could be added to their growing list of victims? How can priests close ranks and defend another priest who is guilty of molesting a kid? Why are bishops and priests afraid to speak out against an obvious moral wrong?

Saviano simply cannot comprehend that mentality.

"It is clear the decision is always to protect a fellow priest," he said. "I don't understand that. That's one thing. The other thing is I don't understand why they want guys like this to remain in the priesthood, regardless of if there is a shortage or not. It corrupts the whole image of the priesthood."

Through the discovery process of his court case, Saviano came into possession of several letters, which were sent to and from various bishops in Worcester, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas. The subject was Father Holley and his problem.

"[The letters] clearly show they knew that Holley was

screwing around with kids and they were looking for other dioceses to place him," said Saviano. "But there is never any mention in those letters about placing him in a situation where he would not have contact with kids or placing him in a position where the parishioners would be warned ahead of time not to engage in certain situations with this guy."

Holley's history could serve as a case study of how a problem priest was simply shifted around from diocese to diocese.

"I don't understand that. As much as I've learned

"Bishop Flanagan's words, repeated more than once to me were, 'You must never tell anyone. The church will take care of this.'"

— Ed Gagne, on reporting allegations of abuse to Bishop Bernard Flanagan

about this issue and as many victims as I've talked to — that is the one point that I just can't seem to get over in my mind," said Saviano.

Gagne also is at a loss as to how to explain the way the church has dealt with this issue.

His alleged abuser, Father O'Donoghue, admitted in a deposition that he had had two previous incidents involving children, in 1960 and 1965. He was sent to St. Joseph's Abbey, he said, for "prayer and reflection." He

anonymous, said Inzerillo "made a pass at him" at a diocesan retreat several years ago. He considered bringing the incident to the attention of Inzerillo's superiors, but was told not to if he wished to continue to pursue a career as a priest. He decided to abide by that advice. He eventually discontinued his study for the priesthood for other reasons, he said.

Gagne's sense of betrayal is exceedingly deep. While he has heard privately from some priests who anonymously told him they supported what he was doing, the response of the hierarchy was very much wanting, as far as he is concerned.

"I have learned there are some clergy out there who know right from wrong and who truly embrace their Christian values, morals and ethics," he said.

"The priests who abused me violated their ability to help and protect. I turned to them for leadership and guidance, not to be sexualized. The faces they showed me were very different than those they presented to the rest of the world. Very different."

"This could have ended a long time ago. All I ever wanted was for them to say they were sorry."

Lewcon's situation is little different. According to a letter his lawyer received during the discovery process, Bishop Flanagan knew Father Teczar had his problems.

As a seminarian, Teczar got into hot water. He was fired by one diocese for a sexually related incident. After this incident had occurred, he was ordained in this diocese, said Lewcon.

"[Teczar] took a year off from the seminary and had therapy," said Lewcon. "He had mental health issues to deal with and the church knew this prior to his [1967] ordination."

A 1967 letter to Bishop Flanagan from Monsignor David Elwood of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Winchendon details some of the concerns the diocese had about Teczar.

"I would suggest no further warnings should be given about his formerly manifested predilection for intimate and rather exclusive companionship with young boys," Elwood wrote. "If this breaks out again, I do not think he



continued to serve as a parish priest. And he abused again.

After accusations about Father Inzerillo arose, he was removed as pastor of St. Anthony of Padua in Fitchburg by Bishop Harrington. However, he was allowed to teach at the parish elementary school.

Parents of the students were extremely uncomfortable with Inzerillo being allowed to serve in that capacity, given the nature of the allegations against him. They sent an anonymous letter to the *Telegram & Gazette* outlining the situation, after their concerns fell on deaf ears and it was apparent to them the diocese was not going to act to protect their children.

It may have been the threat of media involvement that finally forced the diocese to place Inzerillo on administrative leave, said one person familiar with the case. A former seminarian student, who wished to remain

should be ordained."

Despite the concerns and the diocese's awareness of his problems, Teczar was ordained.

When sexual abuse by members of the clergy became a nearly daily staple in the *Telegram & Gazette*, the diocese began to take some public steps to address the problem that had previously been addressed privately.

Bishop Timothy Harrington, who died in March 1996, established a hotline, which victims could use to report incidents of abuse directly to diocesan officials. He announced that no child abuser would be assigned to a ministry in the diocese. In 1994, he established a committee called the Commission on Policies and Procedures for Allegations of Abuse. Bishop Reilly restructured the commission in 1996 and renamed it the Pastoral Care Committee.

Harrington, in his effort to uncover problem priests, al-

so instituted a practice that was apparently abandoned after questions were raised about its legality. In 1993, at the height of the rampant publicity, about 20 priests were questioned by diocesan lawyers and asked a series of questions about themselves, their habits and sexual matters.

The Rev. Henry Bowen, a canon lawyer, wrote to the bishop to inform him of the possible violations of civil and canon law that such questioning might entail.

"Personally, I would add that your motives may be well-founded, but the lives of many priests, perhaps the innocent along with the guilty, are being decimated," Bowen wrote in an August 1993 letter to Harrington. "They will never be the same again."

The fact that the diocese has instituted a policy to deal with these cases of abuse may be construed as a step forward by some, said Saviano, but "there is really very little of substance contained in this document."

He has several concerns, the first being that the committee is made up primarily of priests, nuns and diocesan officials, with only a few laypeople.

"What concerns me most, however, is there aren't any provisions for imposing a leave of absence for the accused, until the allegations are substantiated," he said. "There is also no mention of a counseling provision to help the accuser deal with the emotional aspects of his experience."

He believes the policy was motivated by the overwhelming negative press the Catholic Church has been receiving of late. "I really believe the only reason they came out with this policy is to offset the negative publicity," said Saviano. "There have been so many cases, I think they are aware they cannot be so cavalier about

this problem as they have been in the past because it is getting harder and harder to keep it from the public.

"I think the bottom line for them, from what I have seen, the bottom line for them is not the well-being of the parishioners; it is their image. It is a financial issue for them and I firmly believe if it wasn't for the publicity they never would have come out with that policy."

The church has certainly been paying more attention to the issue of sexual abuse. But Clohessy, like Saviano, wonders whether the attention will serve to end this problem.

"I think they are paying more attention, but not all of that attention is good," said Clohessy. "I think they are posturing and they have made — I would use the phrase minimal — headway toward really grappling with this. ... I would argue that unless the organizational culture really changes in some significant way the problem is not simply going to go away."

The issue of celibacy, Clohessy believes, is inextricably part of the current situation facing the Catholic Church.

Perhaps what is lost in all this discussion, in the assigning of blame and finger pointing, in the questioning of what the church knew and when they knew it, is the sad, simple fact that children have been abused by people they see as God's representatives on earth.

"I don't understand how anyone can hurt a child," Gagne said quietly. "I still ask why."

He paused. "I still ask why."

Survivors of abuse unite

By Ellen T. Keener

Phil Saviano settled his case against the Worcester diocese in 1996.

He had learned a lot through his court experience and knew he wanted to stay involved somehow in order to help others.

What got him back into the fray was the case of a priest in the Boston archdiocese — the Rev. John Geoghan — whose history was similar to the Rev. David Holley's.

"He had spent approximately 30 years in a lot of towns, abusing a lot of kids," said Saviano. "People were coming forward saying they had reported him in the '70s and nothing was ever done. Seeing some of these guys on TV, who were as nervous and as shell-shocked as I was three or four years ago, I thought, 'Wouldn't it be great if there was a way folks like myself, who have sort of already gone through this, could support people who were just getting involved.'"

Saviano started the New England chapter of SNAP (Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests). It is a national organization with approximately 3,000 members. It was founded five years ago by Barbara Blaine of Chicago, a survivor of sexual abuse by a member of the clergy. It is a nondenominational organization that welcomes people of all faiths.

Its mission is three-fold — to provide

for help, support, to share resources and information and to organize for political action to challenge the church to better deal with the issue. The New England chapter held its first meeting in May. The organization is growing every day, said Saviano.

"I just heard from a man who is 70 years old and he had been raped when he was 13 or 14," said Saviano. "He said that experience had haunted him all his life. He felt like he was under a death threat because the priest had told him, 'If you ever tell anybody, I'll kill you or I'll have somebody kill you.' The priest has died and he saw one of the TV reports about SNAP two months ago. He's kept the number for two months. Finally, he called."

Other than his therapist, he had told no one about the abuse for all those years, said Saviano.

"I think it is more healthy in the long run to just come out with it," said Saviano. "I think in that sense the organization serves a really important purpose."

It also provides a networking opportunity for people who are in litigation, he said.

"I think that kind of thing probably makes the church very nervous because prior to this, the victims were very isolated and [the church] reinforced that isolation through the gag orders."

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