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A JOURNEY TOWARD HEALING

New allegations of Taos County priest sexual abuse filed in past year



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Fr. Leo Courcy, a priest who in the 1960s served St. Anthony Catholic Church in Questa, was named as a sexual abuser in a lawsuit filed since the Archdiocese of Santa Fe released its list of credible abused priests, which his name appears on.

KATHARINE EGLI

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This story is part of our special report, "A Journey Toward Healing." Read the story of Donald Naranjo (<https://www.taosnews.com/stories/his-cross-to-bear,53144?>), a 70-year-old man seeking healing and justice after recovering the memories of priest sexual abuse that happened to him when he was a teenager.

The following lawsuits allege abuse by priests in Taos County or the surrounding areas. Most of the priests are deceased. The suits were filed since September 2017 when the Archdiocese of Santa Fe released a list of more than 70 "credibly accused" priests, brothers and other members of religious orders.

John Doe 73 – Questa; Fr. Leo Courcy

Courcy was accused of sexually abusing an altar boy in 1969 while serving as a priest at Questa's St. Anthony Parish. The lawsuit was filed Nov. 29, 2017 against the archdiocese, St. Anthony's parish and the Servants of the Paraclete. Courcy was named in the 2017 list of accused priests.

"Defendants' priest (Courcy) told plaintiff to come with him to the rectory for counseling and discipline, where he had plaintiff drink glass after glass of wine, while lecturing him about fighting and God's love. Fr. Courcy then raped plaintiff in the rectory during which plaintiff passed out...Plaintiff believed (he) had to do whatever Fr. Courcy and any priests told him to do, including to never mention what had happened lest his soul be damned forever."

Jane Doe I – Costilla; Fr. Thaddeus Mazur

Mazur was accused of sexually abusing a girl when she was about nine or 10 years old. The abuse allegedly happened at Costilla's Sagrado Corazon Church. Mazur was priest in Costilla from 1957 to 1966. The lawsuit against the archdiocese was filed May 21, 2018. Mazur's name has been added to the archdiocese list since 2017.

"But for the fact that Fr. Mazur was a priest, Plaintiff's family would never have allowed Plaintiff to spend unsupervised time with a relatively unknown man. They completely trusted Fr. Mazur, and they even believed he represented 'God on earth' and could do no wrong...Defendants knew that using vestments, cloaks, wine, rituals and intermingling religious rhetoric with physical closeness with children, that minors would be subject to the extraordinary powers priests held."

John Doe 87 – Peñasco; Fr. Roger Martinez

Martinez, who is still alive, was accused of sexually abusing an altar boy who was part of Peñasco's San Antonio de Padua parish during the fall of 1978. The lawsuit against the archdiocese and the Peñasco parish was filed June 27, 2018. Martinez was included in the 2017 list of accused priests.

"Fr. Martinez knew that altar boys were trained to give unquestioning obedience to priests and abused their trained obedience for his own sexual gratification...As a direct and proximate result of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of Fr. Martinez, plaintiff suffers and continues to suffer severe emotional and psychological distress. Plaintiff now struggles with alcohol, embarrassment, humiliation, loss of faith, loss of sexual capacity and intimacy, loss of self-esteem, depression, anger issues, authority issues, hypervigilance with his children and other damages."

John Doe 93 – Ranchos de Taos; Fr. Joseph Maguire

Maguire was named in a lawsuit alleging abuse of John Doe 93 in 1955. The lawsuit was filed Nov. 5, 2018 against the archdiocese and the San Francisco de Asis parish, which is a separate legal entity from the archdiocese. Maguire is not included in the archdiocese list of credibly accused priests.

“The sexual abuse destroyed (John Doe 93’s) religion, rendered his soul veritably shredded and destroyed the ability to trust which carried over to being unable to have any religion...Plaintiff now realizes he needs to understand why he has suffered from debilitating anxiety, sleep disorders, nightmares, depression, trust issues, intimacy issues and a profound loss of faith, and has been otherwise harmed.”

Jane Doe M – Abiquiu; Fr. Ralph Pairon

Fr. Pairon was accused of sexually abusing a 10-year-old girl who was an altar server, beginning in 1969. The lawsuit, filed Nov. 6, 2018, names the archdiocese and Abiquiu’s St. Thomas the Apostle parish as defendants. Pairon’s name was included in the 2017 list of credibly accused priests.

“The defendants imbued Fr. Pairon with unchecked powers over Catholic children and teens, which caused situations where sexual abuse flowed therefrom. Area families were taught, and taught their children, to obey without question any priest who was God’s representative on earth, but even setting aside religious belief, to trust and obey priests as a matter of respect for community leaders.”