

Priest D

In the late 1970's, *Priest D* was assigned as a deacon,<sup>25</sup> to a parish in Suffolk County. There, he sexually abused a minimum of six boys who ranged in age from 10 to 17. Some of these boys *Priest D* abused during assignments to three different parishes. *Priest D* would expose the boys to masturbation through conversation and physical exploration. He had a trove of pornographic magazines and videos in his room in the rectory that was available to the boys.<sup>26</sup> *Priest D* often took his victims on trips outside of the parish. On these trips he would fondle the boys and engage in mutual masturbation. *Priest D* told them this was normal behavior between men. The abuse often began during wrestling matches and escalated to both oral and anal sodomy. On one occasion, a victim witnessed *Priest D* engaging in an act of oral sex with another adult male in a motel.

Often, boys would spend the night with *Priest D*, either on trips or in his rooms at the rectory. During the night they would wake up to *Priest D* with his mouth on their genitals. Some boys witnessed *Priest D* abusing others. Frequently the boys would sleep in the same bed as *Priest D*, he claimed it was to keep warm. *Priest D* took at least one of these boys to “peep shows” in New York City.

One of the victims from *Priest D*'s diaconate assignment told another priest assigned to the parish that *Priest D* was abusing him. He described in detail both masturbation and oral sex. He also told the priest that he thought *Priest D* was abusing another child. There is no evidence

<sup>25</sup> The year prior to ordination is spent by a seminarian in a parish and is called the diaconate year. During that time, the priest is referred to as a deacon. A deacon in his diaconate year is different than the laymen who are trained and function as permanent deacons.

<sup>26</sup> A priest occupying a room in a rectory formerly occupied by *Priest D* discovered two pornographic videotapes in a dresser drawer. He disposed of these tapes and later told his pastor who did nothing. Additional details of this will be discussed later in this report.

that this priest took any action with respect to *Priest D*. *Priest D* continued his abusive behavior after his ordination. In his first two parish assignments the victim tally rose. While continuing to abuse some of the boys he met in his diaconate year, he met and abused others. At one parish, he introduced one of his victims as his brother. As a result of this lie, the boy spent many nights in *Priest D's* rectory room without any questions being asked.

In his second parish assignment, *Priest D* continued to use pornography to groom<sup>27</sup> his victims. The pornographic magazines and videos were easily accessible in *Priest D's* room and were visible to anyone who entered. *Priest D* told the boys that they could watch the movies and masturbate if they were aroused, because he was “trustworthy” None of the priests in the rectory ever questioned the presence of these boys in *Priest D's* rooms.

These behaviors continued in *Priest D's* third assignment. The boys there were groomed with pizza and movies. They were often altar boys. They slept in the rectory numerous times without being questioned. These same boys often visited *Priest D* at his fourth assignment where he continued his abusive pattern. One of *Priest D's* victims from this period described being sexually abused “hundreds of times”

At one point, early on his career, a formal complaint was made to the Diocese regarding *Priest D*. Two things prompted it; the disturbing observations of an employee of the parish school and by what only can be described as a child’s “cry for help”. An eighth grade student had come to this employee complaining that he did not want to go on a trip with *Priest D* and that he did not know how to tell his parents. The employee offered to tell the child’s parents as well as to put them in touch with the pastor and later did so. After this, when the employee

<sup>27</sup> Grooming is what offenders do to loosen the inhibitions and gain the trust of their victims prior to engaging in sexual activity. It also helps insure their silence.

noticed children in the school yard with overnight bags, and they explained that they were going away with *Priest D*, or spending the night in his room in the rectory, the employee decided more aggressive action was required. The employee had numerous conversations with *Priest D* about his behavior and also informed the parish pastor and a priest, who had once been a high-ranking member of the Immaculate Conception Seminary staff. At the request of this priest, the employee wrote down everything known about *Priest D* including multiple personal observations and concerns. A short time later, four pages of notes were handed to a member of the Diocesan team that existed to deal with priests who sexually abused minors. When *Priest D* was transferred that same year, to another parish with a school, the employee was distraught after realizing that the carefully documented observations and concerns had been carelessly disregarded.

Examination of the records of the agency within the Diocese, charged with the responsibility for investigating and monitoring priests involved in the sexual abuse of minors, corroborate that the Diocese did receive and document the complaint. Notes from one of the priests assigned to handle issues relating to the sexual abuse of children by priests in the Diocese indicate, “Early in 1990, we had a complaint from (name omitted) that *Priest D* had grammar-school age boys in his private room in the rectory (even overnight). (name omitted) met with him, he was evasive. We noted in June 1990, that *Priest D* should be under supervision.” (Grand Jury Exhibit 214).

The Grand Jury finds, that *Priest D* was never sent for a psychiatric evaluation, never placed on restricted ministry and in fact, never supervised. Moreover, none of the pastors of the parishes where he served was informed of the complaint nor that the Diocese was aware of a situation that could put the children of their parishes at risk. Neither *Priest D*'s personnel folder,

confidential folder or secret archive folder contains any reference to a complaint about young boys. (Grand Jury Exhibit 6).

Years later, the diocesan employee who had formally complained about *Priest D* read a newspaper article about him sexually abusing boys. Upon inquiry to the Diocese, the employee was told that there was no record of the original complaint, and that the four pages of notes had never been made a part of *Priest D's* personnel records. The employee wrote another letter to the Diocese, and to the priest who had received the original notes, reiterating the concerns and requesting that the Diocese not hide behind a wall of secrecy, but pass along the information to law enforcement,

Last night Channel 12 stated that.... there was nothing on *Priest D's* file. I find that very hard to believe especially since you came to my office ...and you wrote a report based on my allegations which I think I signed. ...When *Priest D* was reassigned to.... another parish with a school, I knew that my concerns were not taken seriously. Sadly, *Priest D* was allowed to continue his criminal behavior with prepubescent boys. The fact that the diocese ignored credible warnings causes me great pain. I only hope that the boys I know come forward and file criminal complaints even though the statute of limitations has expired. (Grand Jury Exhibit 2).

Even though, by this time they knew that *Priest D* was a serial child molester, the Diocese refused to pass along the letter to law enforcement because they interpreted the complaints as not involving “allegations of sexual misconduct, but rather...conduct which could be perceived as improper” (Grand Jury Exhibits 1, 2 and 5). One need only review the facts as the Diocese knew them to realize the disingenuous nature of this statement. The personal notes of a priest who interviewed *Priest D* after the newspaper article appeared, but before the receipt of this correspondence from the parish school employee, show that *Priest D* had admitted to high ranking Diocesan officials that he had sexually abused at least twelve boys, including boys at the school where the employee had worked. (Grand Jury Exhibit 6E).

Although some tried, very few of *Priest D's* victims told anyone in an official capacity what was happening to them during the time they were actually being sexually abused. The majority did not disclose the abuse until they were adults.<sup>28</sup> The reasons they cited for this were consistent. Most significantly, they did not think they would be believed. They also felt that describing the conduct to an adult would cause trouble simply because sex, especially sex with a priest was something you could not discuss with adults. As children, they also felt allegiance to their abuser and enjoyed the attention he lavished on them. *Priest D* also told the boys not to tell anyone, underscoring with his victims what they already knew - that no one would believe them.

*Priest D* was ordained as a Deacon in the Diocese of Rockville Centre in the late 1970's. From that point, until his placement on administrative leave in the early spring of 2002, he had seven different assignments within the Diocese. Over his 25-year career, *Priest D* had an average service period in each assignment of just more than three years. The standard term for parish assignments was at least five years. These excessive transfers alone should have been a warning sign to supervisors and fellow priests. They weren't. Not surprisingly, the Diocese ignored even clearer warnings of improper conduct and fostered *Priest D's* continued abuse of children.

*Priest D* committed serious acts of sexual abuse upon underage adolescent boys in his diaconate year when he was assigned to a parish. During his testimony before the Grand Jury, the pastor of this parish indicated that he did not review the personnel file of *Priest D* before he

<sup>28</sup> The evidence before the Grand Jury shows the extreme lengths victims went to avoid disclosure and controversy including allowing *Priest D* to marry them and baptize their children rather than explain to their families why they wouldn't want him to.

arrived and that such a review was not done in those days. Additionally, he offered that he believed there were no established guidelines for priest behavior and conduct in the rectory of his parish. In fact, he felt it was permissible for teenagers to be in a priest's private living quarters if the youth minister or the child's family were aware of it.

*Priest D's* victims testified that pornography was available to them in his room at the rectory. The pastor in *Priest D's* diaconate assignment, who never saw any pornography in his rectory, told the Grand Jury that he would not report the presence of pornography in a priest's private room to anyone. He did not consider the presence of such items a serious matter.

Another parish priest, who succeeded *Priest D* in the parish, testified that he felt the Diocese was not under any obligation to notify a pastor of a previous allegation of sexual misconduct by a priest assigned to him. Although he knew it was improper to have guests in his private rooms in the rectory, he felt no obligation to report another priest who did.

Upon the completion of his diaconate year, *Priest D* was ordained and transferred to his first assignment. The assignment lasted six months. The pastor of the parish testified that the term was exceedingly brief but could not recall why. Nevertheless, after a period of only a few months, *Priest D* was transferred to a parish with an elementary school.

*Priest D's* new term lasted for seven years. Residing in the rectory with him at that time was his pastor and the priest who was serving as Director of Priest Personnel.<sup>29</sup> The pastor testified that he had been unhappy with *Priest D*. He knew that his previous assignment had been short and discussed it with the Director of Priest Personnel. The Director explained to him

<sup>29</sup> The Director of Priest Personnel works in Diocesan headquarters and has a variety of duties and responsibilities including, but not limited to, arranging for the placement and transfer of priests, assisting priests whose personal or situational needs require attention, assisting in conflict situations involving priests' performance and holding exit interviews with priests at the time of resignation. (Grand Jury Exhibit 161). The Director of Priest Personnel is elected to this position by the priests of the Diocese.

that a conflict existed in the previous assignment, however, he could not recall and did not offer any details to the Grand Jury as to its nature. Despite their concerns, *Priest D* was allowed to become involved in the parish school and in the religious education program in his new assignment.

His pastor in this assignment explained to the Grand Jury that in 2002, *Priest D* applied to become a pastor and he was asked to provide a letter of reference. He brought a copy of his letter to the Grand Jury. In his words, it offered a mixed review of *Priest D's* performance. For some reason, this letter was not in the personnel file maintained by the Diocese of Rockville Centre for *Priest D*. The pastor was given the opportunity to review *Priest D's* personnel file as produced to the Grand Jury in response to a subpoena issued to the Diocese. The original letter he sent to Diocesan administrative officials was not found.<sup>30</sup>

In the mid 1980's, *Priest D* was transferred to another parish with an elementary school. Prior to this assignment, there was no contact between pastors about *Priest D*. They did discuss their common concerns about him after a year had passed. These included his explosiveness, fighting with personnel and staff, and a generally poor temper.

His new pastor testified that he did not have access to *Priest D's* personnel file. While his initial impression of *Priest D* was positive, this began to change. A school employee, who was a member of a religious order, told the Pastor that children no longer wanted to go places with *Priest D*.<sup>31</sup> The school employee related concerns to the pastor about *Priest D's* conduct with underage boys. At this time, the pastor realized that some inappropriate conduct might be taking

<sup>30</sup> The letter provided by the Pastor is marked in evidence as Grand Jury Exhibit 39.

<sup>31</sup> This employee is previously referenced as later formally complaining to the Diocese about *Priest D's* conduct with young boys.

place. He later conceded that, approximately one and one half years into *Priest D's* term, he became aware that boys were spending time in *Priest D's* private rectory room. This observation predated his conversation with the school employee. Despite his own observations and the information from the employee, he did not immediately speak with *Priest D* or confront him about the situation. He later had a conversation with *Priest D* about his conduct and, despite assurances that it would not happen again, he found that *Priest D* still entertained boys in his room. This included overnight stays by these children. The pastor's own observation of *Priest D's* living quarters revealed that there was only one bed. He never saw any sleeping bags. In these quarters, he knew children were staying overnight in the room with *Priest D*. The fair implication of this was that there was only one bed for *Priest D* and a child to sleep in. Inexplicably, despite all of these circumstances, the pastor told no one within the Diocese of his observations and concerns. *Priest D* blatantly ignored and violated the admonition of the pastor to discontinue his behavior without consequence, perpetuating his ability to have unfettered access in the rectory to children who he sexually abused.

The pastor admitted that *Priest D's* actions could constitute sexual misconduct, a serious criminal offense. He did not, however, want to believe that this conduct was occurring and so he left it to the parents to handle the situation for their children. He believed that the employee of the school who had complained to him about *Priest D* was trustworthy and good with children, yet despite her allegations, he did not think anything was wrong even when he saw children staying overnight in his own rectory. The pastor ultimately asked that *Priest D* be transferred allegedly because they did not get along. The transfer was granted.

When another priest replaced *Priest D* in the parish, the pastor observed similar conduct with boys taking place in the rectory. Nevertheless, he again reported nothing to Diocesan

officials. When asked if he would report anything now having the benefit of hindsight, he said he still would not make a report to Diocesan officials, even under the current circumstances and with the knowledge he now possesses.

After his transfer, *Priest D* went to a third parish where he resided for almost nine years. Again, this parish operated a school. The pastor of that parish testified that he did not review the personnel file of *Priest D* at any point. He denied receiving any complaints of a sexual nature concerning *Priest D*. In fact, he did not become aware of any allegations of sexual abuse until 2002 when a victim came to speak to him and complained that *Priest D* has abused him.

After completing that term, *Priest D* was transferred again. This term lasted for one year. His pastor there testified that he might have spoken with a previous pastor concerning *Priest D* but was unsure. However, after a matter of months, he asked for *Priest D's* transfer for a variety of reasons, none of them allegedly having to do with sexual abuse. In a letter dated March 9, 1998, the pastor requested that the Bishop transfer *Priest D* based upon his bad temper, poor judgment and the perception that *Priest D* was unlikely to improve based upon his history.<sup>32</sup> Although he denied it, the Grand Jury finds that this reference to *Priest D's* history implies that the pastor must have known something of his past. In a second letter dated two days later, the Pastor requests that *Priest D* be transferred immediately. Again, the request is based upon *Priest D's* personality and makes no reference to sexual abuse.<sup>33</sup>

Obviously, this Pastor knew that *Priest D* was a troubled priest. Indeed, this was confirmed when his successor priest moved into *Priest D's* old room in the rectory. As he was cleaning a dresser, he came across what he called "girlie tapes". He destroyed the tapes and then

<sup>32</sup> Grand Jury Exhibit 42.

told the pastor what he had found. The pastor did not report this to anyone. In 2002, when *Priest D* applied to be a member of the pastoral pool, the Diocese requested letters of reference. The Pastor of the parish where the tapes had been discovered was obviously troubled about what he knew about *Priest D* and wrote two letters to a Diocesan official about him. In his first letter in January 2002, the Pastor indicated reservations about *Priest D* based upon his temper, an issue concerning stolen money, and the discovery of the videotapes. Still troubled, several days later he wrote again providing additional details about the circumstances of the discovery of the tapes, specifically, indicating the new priest had found them in *Priest D's* old room.<sup>34</sup>

After *Priest D's* sexual abuse of boys became public knowledge, he was finally relieved of his assignment. In a classic illustration of the insular and secretive manner that the Diocese handled issues of priest sexual abuse, they failed to notify even the Diocesan Communications Director of this. In an e-mail message, she expressed her dismay:

It seems that the information highway in this organization only runs one way. It is pathetic that the Cabinet Secretary for communications is not in the loop and has to hear that one of our priests has been relieved of his assignment from a Newsday reporter who is asking why...(Grand Jury Exhibit 6G).

<sup>33</sup> Grand Jury Exhibit 42.

<sup>34</sup> In a memo dated March 15, 2002, a high ranking Diocesan official addresses the finding of the videotapes. This will be discussed later in this report.