

Priest E

As a Diocesan high school teacher, *Priest E* also had a summer parish assignment on Fire Island. It was there, while readying the church for the summer months, *Priest E* abused one of his high school students. The student had accompanied *Priest E* to assist him, and they stayed on Fire Island for about a week, sleeping on a, “futon-like”, couch together. During the night, *Priest E* would touch the boy and crawl on top of him and masturbate. When the boy became upset, *Priest E* consoled him, telling him nothing was wrong, “These are things priests normally do.” The naïve and sexually inexperienced boy believed him. The sexual contact between the two lasted for about eighteen months, occurring a half a dozen times. Once, at the apartment of his mother, *Priest E* tried to perform oral sex on the boy. This effort was unsuccessful.

Later, after *Priest E*'s transfer to another parish, the boy accompanied him on a camping trip. Two brothers, approximately ten and twelve, from *Priest E*'s new parish, came along. *Priest E* slept in a camper with the youngest boy. The two others slept outside. In the early morning, the older boys went fishing. During that time, the twelve-year-old said he felt sorry for his younger brother because “*Priest E* will be playing with him.” He confided in his new friend that sometimes *Priest E* “played with him until he spit.” The high school student never had contact with *Priest E* again after this trip.

Priest E's student never told anyone about the abuse until he applied for a job in law enforcement as an adult. His disclosure was prompted by a question on the job application about whether he had ever had a homosexual experience. This, in turn, prompted *Priest E*'s former student to call a Monsignor³⁵ in the Diocese of Rockville Centre, who was also a personal friend

³⁵ Monsignor is an honorary title conferred on a priest by the Pope upon recommendation of the Bishop.

and tell him what *Priest E* had done to him as a child. The Monsignor immediately contacted one of his superiors for whom the story was repeated in detail.³⁶ The next day, the Diocese told him *Priest E* was already in alcohol rehabilitation. Since he was being treated, in the eyes of Diocesan officials, the issue was resolved. There was no further contact between the parties at any time thereafter.

Priest E sexually abused other children as a parish priest. He became particularly close, “like a brother”, to the father of one of his victims. *Priest E* was a frequent visitor in his home, and they shared a love for many of the same activities, particularly skiing. One evening after *Priest E* was no longer in the parish, a neighbor of this close friend called with the news that *Priest E* had attempted to fondle his son. *Priest E*’s friend was incredulous and told his neighbor he would find *Priest E* and have him come over to discuss the matter that same night. While waiting for *Priest E* to arrive, the man’s own son broke down, admitting that *Priest E* had actually been sexually abusing him.

His neighbor’s problems forgotten, the man learned that the abuse of his son began when he was an altar boy at age eleven and *Priest E* was a fairly new associate in their parish. The abuse lasted for four years. While the family was waiting for *Priest E* to arrive, they contemplated their options. They thought about calling the police and the pastor but decided to wait until *Priest E* arrived and was confronted. They weren’t really sure what they were going to do. *Priest E* arrived, repentant and crying. When asked how he could betray such a trust, he had no answer.

³⁶ The information about the two young boys on the camping trip was part of the disclosure.

Ultimately, the family told *Priest E* they wouldn't have him arrested if he went to the Diocese, admitted what he had done, and refused any assignment where he would be involved with children. That was all they wanted from him; the family decided they needed all of their energy to help their son recover and move beyond what had happened. *Priest E* thanked them and told them he was glad his problems were out in the open and that, perhaps, some good would come of it.

At that time, although they were aware *Priest E* was treated, they did not know where or for what duration. They focused on their son and his problems. Unfortunately, there were many.

After high school, this victim of *Priest E's* perversions, entered the Army. He was discharged a drug addict. Fearing the addiction was related to their son's sexual abuse, the family reached out to their pastor for help. They were offered nothing. After a succession of drug treatment programs failed to help him, the now very troubled young man ended up living on the streets. He ultimately met up with a counselor from a local agency for troubled kids. A religious brother in this agency was finally able to connect him with the Diocese of Rockville Center for the help he so desperately needed.

A priest involved in the Diocesan team that dealt with priests who had sexually abused children arranged for his all expense paid treatment at an out of state facility. The young man's father reached out to this priest to offer assistance and to assure the Diocese his family was supportive. His calls were never returned.

During treatment, father and son communicated regularly. Things went well, at first. The father became concerned when his son told him had purchased a motorcycle and a truck. He asked where the money was coming from and was told by his son that he was, "talking to the Diocese." The father begged his son to allow the Diocese to pay for his treatment and therapy,

but not to take any other money from them. As the father explained to the Grand Jury, “I wanted him to get better, not rich.”

In January, about three months after the beginning of treatment, their son called with the happy news that he had moved into an apartment of his own. Mother and son discussed how flowers could brighten the apartment and which ones were appropriate to the climate. The next day, the local police called to inform them that their son was dead, the apparent victim of drug induced heart failure.

They brought their son’s body back to Long Island for burial. At his funeral, the Diocesan priest who had arranged for their son’s drug treatment eloquently spoke to them about their loss.

About two weeks later, they made the sad trip to their son’s apartment to retrieve his personal belongings. As they looked through his papers, they were astonished, angry and disbelieving. Not only did they discover rent receipts from motels for months when they believed their son was in residential treatment,³⁷ they found both letters and legal paperwork from the Diocese of Rockville Center.³⁸

As they would learn, the Diocese had, in full settlement of all legal claims, paid their son \$25,000 in cash, “for the provision of future counseling services”. (Grand Jury Exhibit 77). Not only had they not been consulted or informed, the Diocese did not involve any of the treatment professionals working to help their son in this process.

³⁷ These receipts are in evidence. (Grand Jury Exhibits 74, 75, 76).

³⁸ Legal paperwork, including an original letter, releases and other settlement documents are in evidence. (Grand Jury Exhibit 77).

The next year, the father wrote a letter to the priest who had arranged for his son's treatment, paid him the \$25,000 in cash, and then attended his funeral (Grand Jury Exhibit 78).

In relevant part, the letter reads as follows:

Dear Reverend,

Sufficient time has elapsed since the death of my son (name omitted) so that this letter cannot be taken as being written out of grief...

The following are my list of conclusions which I will attempt to elaborate on individually:

- 1. Priest E was a pedafile (sp.).*
- 2. The church did allow Priest E to feel he could exercise his perversion without punishment.*
- 3. An open door policy on sexual abuse was not as well known to L.I. clergy as believed.*
- 4. Reverend (name omitted) initially acted with compassion and a sincere effort to help.*
- 5. The church, in the end, acted to protect itself and became the instrument of my son's death.*

...I called Priest E back to my home late on a Friday night and challenged him on these accusations of sexual abuse, which at the time had been confirmed by my son. He confessed his guilt to my wife and I at this time. He asked my son for forgiveness and claimed to be relieved that his problem was now out in the open. I demanded he report to the diocese these facts and I would await a call from them to determine what further action I would take. This also proved to be an error on my part which will never happen again when I deal with the church as an institution. I was contacted the following Monday by what was reported to be a representative of the diocese, a Sister whose name I cannot recall. I was told that (name omitted) had spoke with the diocese and that he was going into treatment. I was assured that he would be monitored and this nun also game the name of a psychiatrist to take my son to. I was of the opinion that to bring this matter into the public arena would serve no purpose and as long as (name omitted) was sanctioned I refrained from further action.

1. When we spoke on February fourth you told us that there was no record on file against (name omitted) regarding sexual abuse. You also told us that he was brought in to the diocese to answer charges of alcohol abuse at around the time I was supposedly in contact with this nun. You told us that (name omitted) admitted that he had acted imprudently with a teenage boy but that the matter was being handled. These facts now being know (sp.) constitute the basis

for my first two conclusions. (Name omitted) had to feel he had gotten away with the sexual abuse and because his supervisor, (name omitted), did not peruse the imprudent behavior he could return to his parish unaffected by these events. I told you at that time that if I had felt my son's mental health required taking on the Diocese of Rockville Center (sp.) I would have done so in a heartbeat. I have no reason to fabricate the truth so when I tell you (name omitted) admitted his abuse on my son you can rest assured he did so. I also hope that at this time, knowing now what we do about this behavior affliction, no responsible person believes (name omitted) was his only victims. (sp.)

2. (Omitted in its entirety.)

3. I took (name omitted) to the pastor of (name omitted) shortly after the abuse became known. I had spoken with this priest and had made him aware of the facts concerning (name omitted). He spoke to (name omitted) at this time in the hopes of making him understand that he was the victims (sp.) in the relationship with (name omitted). This priest apparently also never notified the diocese. This was of course before you had instituted your open door policy in these matters but not before a mans personal ethics should have been formed. I also spoke to (name omitted) shortly after he took over the parish of (name omitted) about getting help for my son. He did not contact the diocese either and I feel he would have had he known that the diocese would have offered help. This conversation with (name omitted) took place well within the time frame of the so-called open door policy instituted by you. (Name omitted) also made known the abuse in therapy to a priest working in the VA Hospital at Northport. He also never notified the diocese. The first person to call the diocese was a brother (name omitted) who worked at Hope House in Port Jefferson. You, (name omitted), then to your credit became involved with my son.

4. You made arrangements to get (name-omitted) help...You told my wife and I that his getting well was the leading aspect of your commitment to our son. I believe you did truly try at that time to help (name omitted).

5. I sincerely hope that my final conclusion will be taken as constructive criticism. I told you on February fourth that my most sincere hope was that we all learn something from the death of my son. Helping other victims should be our goal. You agreed with me at that time.

I placed a call to your office when my son told me about you...From September of 93 to February of 94 no one made any attempt to reach me. When my son was under going (sp.) other treatment programs in the VA I had spoke several times with the people in charge. In this case I think silence on your part can best be seen as good for the diocese...You told us that (name omitted) began seeking cloudier (sic) with the diocese in the middle of December. You told us that you had spoken with his therapist and were told approximately how much it would cost for his treatment. In papers that I found in his personal affects you entered into an agreement with my son on December the 27th. Mr. (name omitted), whom I spoke to...would like to know the name of the therapist you spoke to. I brought this to the attention of all the people in (name omitted) and without exception we all agreed that no therapist can estimate how long it will take to heal a patient. (Name omitted) will take action against the therapist to whom you spoke.

(Name omitted) you are a learned man with a degree in law and I really think you should have used better judgement (sp.) in this aspect of closure. You told us helping (name omitted) to get better. If any one had contacted... they would have learned that (name omitted) was asked to leave because he was not working the program. The evidence is that from November until his death in January he was not in program. You were dealing with a known substance abuser not in program. There is no doubt in my mind that he had impaired reason during your talks and you should have known this. It is my conclusion that consummated an agreement with a mentally deficient person in order to remove the diocese of Rockville Center (sp.) from harm. It also my conclusion that by agreeing to give (name omitted) a settlement you became his last enabler. The money you sent brought about his death.

My wife and I have been trying to help (name omitted) since he was fifteen years old. We have learned much in helping him. We hope that you who read this letter will be better able to help other victims you encounter. We love our church but it will never be our church right or wrong. We hope it will be our church seeking to help and not looking to always protect itself.

In conclusion I would like to make some requests. I would like the people involved to accept responsibility for their actions and pledge not to repeat any mistakes made...I would like to see this incident openly discussed and I would like to participate in these discussions.

I have been told to sue the diocese but I believe this to be counter productive at this time. I believe that we have in place people who truly care about victims and making them well. I believe we all make mistakes and we can learn from them. If however the diocese returns to a regressive attitude and fails future victims I will also pursue other means to get their attention.

Respectfully yours,

(Name omitted)

There was no response whatsoever from the Diocese to this letter.

Indeed, as the letter writer knew, his son was not *Priest E's* only victim. In addition to the four previously outlined, *Priest E* also sexually assaulted a parish altar boy. *Priest E*, a friend to the family, took this boy skiing when he was twelve. On the way, they stopped to visit *Priest E's* mother overnight. *Priest E* told the boy they would sleep together on a pullout couch. This was confusing since there were available bedrooms for them to use. The boy woke up during the night to *Priest E* fondling his penis. There was no conversation. The boy remembers feeling, "an intense level of terror", and describes being so afraid he could not speak. The boy describes the remainder of the weekend as being a complete blank. Although there was no repetition of

this conduct with *Priest E*, this victim observed *Priest E* fondling a very young boy in bed on a subsequent ski trip.

During treatment for alcohol abuse and depression as an adult, this victim was encouraged by his therapist to report the abuse to the Diocese and did so. He was told, “(*Priest E*) had died, the Diocese was aware that this behavior had been going on. (*Priest E*) was an alcoholic” and they “weren’t sure whether the alcoholism caused the pedophilia or the reverse.” The victim challenged this explanation telling the priest he spoke with, “I am a recovering alcoholic. I never abused a child.” The priest offered counseling which the victim refused. He was shocked and angry about the phone call and wanted nothing further to do with the church.