

Priest L

The brothers who were abused by this priest came to refer to themselves as the, “Forgotten Four” (Grand Jury Exhibit 104) They were a large family, seven boys and one girl. Their mother thought of *Priest L* as her, “eighth son”. *Priest L* began his abuse of the first of the brothers when he was only nine years old. They met when the boy became an altar server in his parish. It was this brother who introduced *Priest L* to his family. In fact, their first sexual contact occurred at their family home. The boy woke up to *Priest L* performing oral sex on him. He remembers no conversation other than *Priest L* advising him not to tell anyone, because no one would believe him. The relationship became so intense that the boy felt separated from both his family and friends. *Priest L* played on this; he told the boy that his family didn’t love him and that they didn’t have time for him because of the number of children they had. *Priest L* bought him things he wouldn’t ordinarily have received.

Priest L’s abuse of this brother, including touching and oral sodomy, continued until the boy was about 16. He was abused in the rectory, on *Priest L*’s boat, on trips and in hotel rooms. Eventually, their contact became less frequent because *Priest L* began to spend more time with his younger brother. Indeed, his mother encouraged him to share *Priest L*’s attention with the other boys in the family. Later, he observed that his two youngest brothers were also spending time with *Priest L*. At one point the two had a physical confrontation about the abuse. *Priest L* told the boy that he was evil and that God would punish him.

As an adult, this victim moved out of the country. About two or three years later, at his wife’s insistence, he told his father about the abuse. At first, his father didn’t believe him. When the victim asked his father to accompany him to confront *Priest L* he agreed. At first, *Priest L* denied the charges. After the victim pressed him he finally admitted what he had done and said

that he was getting help. *Priest L* acknowledged that he was, “sick” His father told *Priest L* that he was no longer welcome in their home. It was after this confrontation with *Priest L* that he decided to speak to his younger brothers about *Priest L*. It was at that time that he learned that two of his brothers, at least, were also abused.⁵⁵ A third brother had also spent time with *Priest L* and the family came to believe that he too had been a victim. They could never confirm this because this brother committed suicide before any disclosures about *Priest L* were made.

Once the boys disclosed *Priest L*'s abuse to their father, he never spoke to them about it again. Their mother was never aware of the abuse, as she had died when they were much younger. After their father's death the surviving sons began to speak to each other about their experiences with *Priest L*. Eventually, they decided to contact the Diocese about him. After a memorial mass for their father one of the boys spoke to the priest about *Priest L*. He referred the boys to a priest in the Diocese who could help them.

Thus began an ordeal for these brothers that would last for over two and a half years. In fact, the grand jury finds that these brothers were re-victimized by the Diocese. Their treatment can be characterized simply; it was a disgrace.

The brothers first met with a high ranking Diocesan official involved in priest personnel matters. A secretary was present at the meeting who took notes. One brother had a tape recorder hidden in his pocket. He recorded most of the meeting. (Grand Jury Exhibit, 86) It struck the brothers as odd that the priest in attendance was most interested in the dates of the abuse. They

⁵⁵ The abuse of these brothers paralleled *Priest L*'s abuse of their older brother. They spent many nights in the rectory. *Priest L* would sneak them in. They remembered that because one step creaked; they had to step over it.

came away from the meeting with the impression that this was the most important issue to the Diocese. They later realized the significance of this in terms of both the civil and criminal statute of limitations.⁵⁶ At the time, this was not on the minds of the victims; it was very hard for them to pinpoint actual dates. In fact, the victims were focused on finding *Priest L*. They felt guilty that they had not disclosed what they knew about him earlier, and were afraid that he had abused other children.

After the meeting the priest they had met with wrote to offer the brothers counseling through either Catholic Charities or at one of the Diocesan hospitals. (Grand Jury Exhibit 87) The brother's thought this was insulting given they had been abused by a priest. The Diocese explained that this was their only offer. They tried to reach the Diocese for further discussion on this issue but they were unable to. Nobody returned their telephone calls and they felt frustrated and ignored.

The brothers decided that they would retain an attorney to assist them. At the time there were only two issues they sought to resolve; they wanted to know where *Priest L* was and they wanted to begin counseling. Three months after the brothers first contacted the Diocese their attorney wrote to address these issues. (Grand Jury Exhibit 88) A meeting was arranged and was held one month later. (Grand Jury Exhibit 90) Present at this meeting were the brothers, their attorney, the priest with whom they had previously met and another priest who was a lawyer, as well as someone who handled issues of clergy sexual abuse.⁵⁷ The meeting was very difficult for the brothers. They had very little confidence in the Diocese especially after they saw the priests

⁵⁶ One of the brothers later contacted law enforcement about the abuse and learned that the statute of limitations had expired.

⁵⁷ The impression of the brothers was that this priest was not interested in the details of their abuse. In fact, he seemed disinterested in them.

“high-fiving” each other in the hallway halfway through the session. Reacting to this, one of the brothers told the priests that he was going to go to Newsday. One of the priests responded, “I know them all down there. I’ll give you their numbers. You write it and it will be libel. You’ll be liable because you have no proof. Do you have any pictures?” The brother who had threatened to go to Newsday told the Grand Jury that he didn’t think he had ever been angrier in his life and that he wanted to kill this priest. In fact, he threatened to throw him out of the window. At this point the others in the room called for calm and they took a break.

When they returned to the table, the Diocese agreed that the brothers could see a counselor of their own choosing. The Diocese required that they provide letters from licensed therapists setting forth a diagnosis and a course of treatment. The diagnosis was expected to be a formal one, such as would be provided to an insurance company. The Diocese required that they outline how long the treatment could reasonably be expected to last, and describe how many sessions per week would be appropriate. (Grand Jury Exhibit 91) For the first time their attorney raised the issue of a monetary settlement that would include payments for educational expenses. In this regard, the parties agreed to put together a proposal that would address these issues. The brothers left the meeting with the understanding that the Diocese had agreed to pay for some future educational expenses for them. (Some months later, their attorney submitted a proposal for the provision of these expenses to the Diocese. (Grand Jury Exhibit 92) A follow up proposal was submitted one month later. (Grand Jury Exhibit 93) The next month the Diocese responded,

We are carefully reviewing the material you have sent. Although, as I have said, we are anxious to make arrangements for medical assistance, the requests regarding education are more problematic. However, we *are* reviewing the entire matter as you requested. (Grand Jury Exhibit 94)

Since the brothers had already begun counseling their attorney requested permission to submit the unpaid bills to the Diocese. (Grand Jury Exhibit 95) He received no response from the

Diocese and so he wrote them again. In this letter, the Diocese is explicitly informed that the brothers therapy was in danger of being terminated, because the bills had not been paid. (Grand Jury Exhibit 96). In fact, the grand jury heard that the brothers had conflicts with therapists because of the continued failure of the Diocese to pay their bills. At least one brother paid the bills on his own so that there would be no interruption in his therapy.

Months passed with no response from the Diocese. After their attorney threatened to report the priest-attorney for an ethics violation, they received a disturbing response to their correspondence. In it the Diocese faults the brothers for not providing the information they needed to assist them with their counseling expenses. This was false. (Grand Jury Exhibits, 97, 98) In his response to this, the attorney for the brothers asks simply, “Kindly answer two straight questions with two straight answers”. (Grand Jury Exhibit 99) This does not happen.

Completely frustrated, one of the boys wrote to another high-ranking official in the Diocese, asking for help. (Grand Jury Exhibit 100) He received no direct response to the letter , only a response from the priest-attorney with whom he had been previously getting nowhere with. In this response, the Diocese outlines new conditions for the provision of, “all necessary therapy and counseling for a period of six months.” The Diocese indicates that at the end of a six-month period they will require a new diagnosis and prognosis. For the first time the Diocese suggests that they may offer a, “lump sum to finance future counseling needs.” (Grand Jury Exhibit 101) To this point the Diocese had not paid any of the brothers mounting therapy bills it had been over a year since they had first met with Diocesan representatives. It took three more personal letters before the Diocese decided they could pay these bills directly. The victim wrote:

Enclosed you will find a bill from Dr. (name omitted) please pay this without delay. The bill should not become any larger as I am not seeing him any longer, thanks to you! We believed a man of God would not lie and deceive. You make promises you have no intentions of keeping.

When we met you, you shook my hand and promised to help my brothers and myself. You also offered help in almost every letter you sent. We trusted you! In my mind you are nothing but a insensitive, uncaring liar.

The pain you are inflicting is immense. I for one have lost my job and I am in jeopardy of losing my wife of fifteen months. My brother are also in similar dire straits. Please let us not forget our brother (name omitted) who saw no other way to cope with *Priest L's* abuse than to take his own young life.

I do not know how to ask you for help, except to beg. If this is the reason I have not heard from you for seven months, then hear it is, Monsignor, I beg you to do the morally correct and extremely late thing and help my brothers and myself as you said, "heal and get on with the future"

The letter was signed the, "Forgotten Four" (Grand Jury Exhibit 104). Another brother wrote a similar letter,

In closing, I would like to say that we are quite aware that we have limited legal power in this area. What we do have is more important and that is the truth, and as you taught us the power and strength of the truth can overcome even those who think they are above the law. Our own brother died at his own hand at the age of eighteen after having been abused... In his memory we will never give up. (Grand Jury Exhibit 112).

Within a week they received a hand written note on the priests personal stationary,

I am sincerely sorry for whatever confusion held up payment of your medical bills. I have paid the doctors directly as you asked... you sounded very angry –if that was because of the problem of the bills not being paid, I understand...But I was concerned that there might be more going on right now in your life. I hope you go ahead and get any help you need- I really do want you to be well and happy. I'll be praying for you and your family in a special way at Christmas. Hold on to your faith in God- it's only His Love that gets us through and shows us the way to the happiness we all deserve.

Finally, after a year and half of waiting, the therapy bills for the victims began to be paid by the Diocese. None of the other issues that the parties had discussed were resolved. The brothers were most anxious to do this. Most especially, they wanted the Diocese to make a

donation to a charitable organization in their deceased brothers name. Initially, the Diocese had agreed to do this. They never did.

Halfway through the following year, the victims sent another letter to the Diocese pleading for help. (Grand Jury Exhibit 106A) They heard nothing. Finally they sought help from the pastor of their church. He put them directly in touch with the Diocesan law firm. The attorney-priest who they had been dealing with for over two years was no longer involved in the matter. Although it took another six months to be resolved, the Diocese ultimately settled with the brothers, paying them \$65,000 each in full satisfaction of all legal claims. (Grand Jury Exhibits 109,110, 111)Although none of the victims thought this was adequate they were so disillusioned and exhausted by the Diocese that they simply wanted to put it all behind them.