

## Priest F

Child sexual abuse is an insidious crime that takes many forms. Some are more overt than others. In *Priest F's* case, his conduct was, at first, so equivocal, his victims weren't really sure it was happening to them – that is, until it happened again and again and again.

In *Priest F's* first assignment, he appears to have made feeble attempts at abusing a boy who was an altar server. Once, when he was working at the rectory on a slow evening, the boy was in the office watching TV, *Priest F* came in and asked if he could join him. He pulled up a chair next to the boy and put his right hand on his thigh. Slowly his hand began to creep up towards the boy's genital area. Alarmed, the boy covered his crotch. After *Priest F's* efforts to push his arm away failed, *Priest F* gave up and left. The boy remembered that *Priest F* was very nervous. He never told anyone at the time because he didn't think anyone would believe him.

The conduct repeated itself within a week, only this time, the boy crossed his legs as soon as *Priest F* pulled up his chair. Even so, *Priest F* tried to push his hand between the boy's legs. Throughout both encounters, *Priest F* never said a word. Even after this second incident, the boy never told anyone. He was embarrassed and didn't want any of his friends to think he was a homosexual. This victim came forward decades later, only after *Priest F* denied sexually abusing anyone in a local newspaper story about sexually abusive priests.

After his first assignment, *Priest F* was transferred within the Diocese to an assignment outside of parish ministry. It was, however, an assignment that provided a large and continuous source of boys – a school. *Priest F* was cautious, but relentless in his pursuit of victims. He fondled boys over their clothes, usually in his office. Always, his actions were hidden by a

poster, newspaper or a book.<sup>39</sup> He talked continuously as he fondled them. Everyone in the school knew to stay away from *Priest F*.

Once, *Priest F* approached one of the boys behind the school stage. He grabbed his crotch. The boy reacted violently, pushing *Priest F* away and warning him never to touch him again.

At one point, two victims complained to the schools' rector, a priest, about *Priest F*. The complaint resulted from one boy's suspicions, later confirmed to be correct, that *Priest F* was abusing another younger boy. The pair thought a complaint by two of them would have to be believed. It wasn't.

The tragic death of a victim's father led, finally, to the end of *Priest F's* sexual abuse of him. At the funeral home, *Priest F* approached the boy, moving close to him. As he moved his hand towards his genitals, the boy told *Priest F*, "Don't ever fucking touch me again or I'll kill you." This event was witnessed by another boy who saw the abusive conduct by *Priest F* and heard the response to it.

After this, both boys were determined to do something about the situation. One boy alerted his parents who accompanied him to a meeting at the school. They spoke with the rector and a lay teacher. No action was ever taken by them or anyone else against *Priest F*. One of the victims described the effect this had on his relationship with his family:

I had a difficult time with this with my family. I grew up very Irish Catholic, very, very conservative...It was a very conservative environment, and the response I had gotten from my family, from my parents specifically was, that's impossible...Priests just don't do these things. You must be mistaken...and, of course, you didn't question it because it's impossible."

<sup>39</sup> One of the victims remembers the first incident of abuse taking place when preparations were underway to attend a right-to-life march on the anniversary of the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision. The students were making banners with *Priest F's* help. It was a banner that was used as the foil on this occasion.

Ironically, *Priest F* would later become instrumental in the development of Diocesan policy in response to allegations of sexual abuse of children by priests.