

Father Roger A. Sinclair

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1947
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 4, 1974

Employment/Assignment History

1974 - 1977	Immaculate Conception, Connellsville, PA
1977 - 1979	Holy Family, Latrobe, PA
1979 - 1980	St. Therese, Uniontown, PA
1980 - 1983	St. Mary, Kittanning, PA
1983 - 1984	Sick Leave
1984 - 2002	Released to the Archdiocese of Military Services
3/7/2002	Facilities Revoked
4/12/2002	Removed from the Archdiocese of Military Services

Summary

In May of 1981, two mothers wrote letters to Bishop Norbert F. Gaughan of the Diocese of Greensburg alleging that Father Roger Sinclair molested their sons (first victim and second victim) when they were approximately 14 years old. In approximately September 1980, Sinclair visited the first victim's father for a drink late one night while the two victims were watching television during a sleepover. After the father went to bed, Sinclair proceeded to chase the victims around the room attempting to "shake hands" with them. Each time Sinclair shook hands with one of the boys, however, he pushed their hands towards their genitals. The first victim reported that Sinclair tried to put his hands down his pants as well.

According to a May 26, 1981 letter from the second victim's mother to Gaughan, both parents first reported the incident to Father Thomas Bertolina, the pastor of St. Mary. She reported, however, that Bertolina failed to address or acknowledge the situation and "*wanted to keep it all hush-hush and swept under the rug.*" Bertolina's inaction on the matter prompted the second victim's mother to report the incident to Gaughan. She pleaded with Gaughan that Sinclair "*needs professional help away from parish life where he cannot bother others*" and expressed concern that although she felt her son was safe, Sinclair could pose a risk to other children if proper action was not taken.

In June of 1981, Bishop William Connare requested therapy for Sinclair through the Catholic Social Services for "*possible hidden hostility and anger which leads to occasional drinking and evinces itself in aggressive behavior.*"

Father Thomas J. Klinzing wrote a memorandum dated August 5, 1981 titled "*Father Sinclair's Problem*" which indicated that Sinclair visited the first victim's father on August 4,

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1981 after Sinclair's abuse had occurred and been reported to the church by the mothers of the boys. During this visit, the father yelled at Klinzing for making up stories about Sinclair, while Sinclair *"just sat there and drank."* According to the first victim, *"Sinclair tells his dad everything and then 'I get it.'"* The first victim became frightened and upset by Sinclair's presence and ran to his mother's home.

During her visit with Klinzing on August 5, 1981, the first victim's mother indicated she wanted to call the police to keep Sinclair away from her son. However, Klinzing urged her to calm down and that *"I would talk to Bishop Gaughan and get back to her later this afternoon."* Later that afternoon, Klinzing spoke with Monsignor John Conway (described above) regarding the incident. Conway relayed the following information to Klinzing:

When Father Sinclair was in Latrobe there was an incident with a young man whom he took on vacation to Florida with him. The young man's father refused, however, to confront Father Sinclair.

It does not appear the Diocese of Greensburg maintained a record of any incident involving Sinclair and a young boy in Florida.

In March 1982, Gaughan stated in a letter to the Catholic Social Services of Allegheny County that *"a number of people were after us to see that Father Roger Sinclair was transferred."* According to Connare, when he asked Sinclair about a transfer, *"he [Sinclair] made it quite clear to me [Connare] that he prefers to remain in his present assignment and to work through his problems."* Connare permitted Sinclair to remain at St. Mary at that time.

An undated document appearing in Sinclair's Diocesan file addressed facts related to the accusations against him. According to this document, the Diocese acknowledged only the complaints of the first two victims'. However, a letter from the second victim's mother dated February 25, 1983 indicated that Sinclair may have had more victims. As the letter stated: *"She [another mother] said a group of mothers was having a meeting regarding Father Sinclair and would I come tell our story as other boys were involved."* During the meeting, the mothers decided to contact the Chief of Police for advice. When the Chief arrived, he indicated he had already heard the *"rumors"* and spoken with Bertolina the previous day.

Despite the assertions of the victims' mothers that they notified Bertolina of the incident between Sinclair and their sons in 1981, during a meeting he had with them, Bertolina *"tried to tell them he did not know the real story of what had happened"* between the victims and Sinclair. The August 5, 1981 memorandum indicated that Klinzing had also spoken with Bertolina regarding details of the incident.

No action was taken against Sinclair.

The mother's February 25, 1983 letter also indicated that Sinclair had unsupervised access to minor boys. She questioned Connare regarding the lack of proper action following the original incident. As she stated:

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Why did he have to bother other boys before something was done – Why Father Bertolina did nothing, even let Father Sinclair have the boys in the rectory to play Atari and eat pizza for many hours at a time – Why no one was concerned for the safety of the young boys of the parish.

Further, according to the second victim's mother, she had heard rumors that Sinclair had exposed himself to male minors and showed "dirty movies" in the rectory.

In a March 2, 1983 letter responding to the mother's letter, Connare stated:

I regret the developments, as I felt the individual concerned was working through his problem with a professional counsellor. I have already arranged a further evaluation and treatment for the individual beginning with approximately the next ten days. He will no longer be in the parish.

On March 3, 1983, Connare wrote a letter to Richard Gilmartin, the Acting Director of the House of Affirmation (a treatment facility for priests). In this letter, Connare thanked Gilmartin for consenting to see Sinclair and provided additional background and contextual information on Sinclair. Significantly, Connare stated that:

On Wednesday, February 23, I received a call telling me that Father had again made some attempts on young boys [to what extent is not clear]. Because it was the second incident in that parish, I felt it necessary to take him from there and to turn to you for help

From June of 1983 to June of 1984 the Diocese placed Sinclair on sick leave and he received therapy for "emotional problems" at the House of Affirmation in Missouri. Following Sinclair's treatment, Connare allowed him to apply for chaplaincy with the Air Force, stating that Sinclair was "a priest in good standing." In a letter dated May 23, 1984 to Archbishop John May of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, Connare stated that Sinclair had been at the House of Affirmation "for emotional problems" Connare also stated that Sinclair would leave the program soon and that his therapists suggested he be assigned as an "auxiliary chaplain for one of the military establishments of the area." Connare assured May that Sinclair had his permission to work in such a setting if it were agreeable to May.

According to a letter from November of 1991, the Topeka State Hospital reported that in November of 1991 Sinclair "managed to gain access to a locked unit deceitfully" and attempted to check out teenage boys from the hospital to go see a movie on two separate occasions. However, the hospital refused to allow Sinclair to escort the minors out of the building. He was subsequently dismissed from the hospital.

In February 2002, a third victim came forward and made a complaint against Sinclair due to abuse that began when the victim was approximately nine or 10 years old. The abuse continued in periodic episodes throughout his early teenage years. This complaint was made to

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the Diocese via an e-mail communication on February 5, 2002 from the victim to Bishop Anthony Bosco. The victim subsequently met with a representative of the Diocese and thereafter engaged in a series of e-mail communications with Father Roger Statnick in March 2002.

According to the victim, he met Sinclair when he was an altar server at the Immaculate Conception church. Sinclair would invite him into the rectory to watch television and eat breakfast prior to serving the early mass. During these visits, Sinclair would often tickle him, although reportedly did not sexually abuse him at that time. Sinclair was then transferred to Latrobe.

The victim had no further contact with Sinclair until he was reassigned to St. Teresa in Uniontown. Because his family considered Sinclair trustworthy and a friend, Sinclair saw the victim and his brothers over the holidays and took them to the Kennywood amusement park in Pittsburgh. Sinclair began inviting the victim and his brothers to the rectory in Uniontown to watch televisions. During these visits, Sinclair would often tickle and wrestle with the boys, with occasional “*inappropriate contact*” (it is unclear whether Sinclair abused the victim’s brothers as well). According to the victim, Sinclair then began to only invite him to the rectory, rather than all of his brothers.

During an overnight stay at Seven Springs Mountain Resort for a convention in 1978 or 1979, Sinclair reportedly slept in the same bed as the victim with only his underwear on. According to the victim, Sinclair kept trying to get closer to him throughout the night. During the second night, Sinclair did not wear any clothing to bed. The victim became uncomfortable, went to the other room to watch television, and ultimately asked to be taken home. According to the victim, Sinclair attempted to inappropriately touch him on this occasion.

Following receipt of this allegation in 2002, the Diocese revoked Sinclair’s Diocesan faculties, rescinded their Archdiocese of Military Services endorsement, and sent him for treatment at the Anodos Center. On March 14, 2002 Statnick e-mailed him and stated, “*I would prefer that we meet again after the assessment and the board’s review.*” However, according to the victim, the Diocese did not follow-through with him. Rather, years later on September 18, 2007, the victim e-mailed Monsignor Lawrence Persico, introduced himself, and informed Persico of his contact with the Diocese in 2002. The victim stated:

The priest at the time took information regarding these incidents and I was told that he would investigate and get back to me. I never received a response. I have tried over the years to make my peace with not only the incidents with Father Sinclair, but also the lack of response from the diocese.

In response to this e-mail, Persico offered the third victim 90 counseling sessions and a meeting with [REDACTED]

In April 2002, a fourth victim, via a telephone call from his attorney, notified the Diocese that he had been sexually abused by Sinclair in 1979 at Holy Family in Latrobe. The victim was approximately 13 years old at the time. According to Diocesan files, “*the event happened in the*

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sacristy of the church after serving Mass. It was interrupted by an older couple that walked into the sacristy.” The victim alleged that Sinclair began wrestling with him and the other altar server. When the other altar server left, “he [Sinclair] continued to wrestle with me and it got rough. It developed into his rubbing up against me, caressing my genitals, and breathing hard on me.” He never told anyone about what had happened and avoided Sinclair after the incident. According to the victim, he could tell “he [Father Sinclair] wanted to revisit the event, so I would leave directly after serving.”

In 2004, ██████ wrote to Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) requesting Sinclair be dismissed from the clerical state. In his letter to Ratzinger, ██████ stated that:
Sinclair has a history of acting out, and has freely admitted that, in the past, he has engaged in inappropriate sexual contact with minor males during the early years of his priestly ministry.

██████ requested to forgo the penal process, since Sinclair had already confessed to the allegations against him and because a trial would only place an additional burden on the Diocese. Meanwhile, on December 23, 2004, Sinclair wrote a letter to His Holiness John Paul II requesting dismissal from the clerical state. On January 1, 2005, he resigned from the priesthood.