

Father Joseph L. Sredzinski

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1944
YEAR OF DEATH:	2015
ORDINATION:	May 9, 1970

Employment/Assignment History

1970-1972	St. Margaret Mary, Lower Burrell PA
1972-1974	Holy Rosary, Republic, PA
1974-1979	St. Mary Czestochowa, New Kensington, PA
1979-1984	St. Peter, Brownsville, PA
06/05/1984-06/05/1989	St. Stanislaus, Calumet, PA
09/1989-12/1989	Theological Studies, North American College, Rome
06/05/1989-1999	St. Joseph, Everson, PA
06/18/1999-07/05/2007	St. Hubert, Point Marion, PA
7/05/2007-04/01/2009	St. Emma's Monastery, Greensburg, PA
7/05/2007-04/24/2009	SCI Greensburg, Greensburg, PA
7/05/2007-8/18/2010	Chaplain, Westmoreland Manor Nursing Home, Greensburg, PA
8/18/2010-/2014	Sacred Heart Church, Jeannette, PA

Summary

According to notes in the Diocesan file of Father Joseph Sredzinski, on May 29, 1991, a meeting was held between Father Roger Statnick and Tim Shoemaker, the then Mayor of Everson, PA. The purpose of the meeting was for Mayor Shoemaker to convey his concerns, and the concerns of the community, to the Diocese of Greensburg regarding Sredzinski's perceived inappropriate relationships with several local boys. Mayor Shoemaker informed Statnick that a local police officer had discovered Sredzinski parked in his car in a cemetery at night with a young boy on May 18, 1991 and written an "incident report" regarding the matter. According to Shoemaker's account of the incident, when approached by the police officer, Sredzinski abruptly exited his vehicle, told the officer nothing was wrong, and that he was merely talking to the boy about some problems he was having.

Additionally, Shoemaker informed Statnick that numerous people in the community had made comments to him about Sredzinski spending too much time with local boys in inappropriate circumstances, such as in the church rectory at night and in the woods at night around a camp fire. Another witness informed the Diocese that she had seen Sredzinski alone in an alley with a young boy around 2:00 a.m. in and around the time he was discovered in the

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cemetery with a young boy.¹¹ This boy in the alley was identified by Shoemaker as one of three boys Sredzinski was, according the community, too-often seen with, the other two being Victim #1 and his younger brother. Shoemaker also informed Statnick about an additional boy who had served as an altar boy and was heavily involved with the church, but had suddenly completely withdrawn from the parish. Shoemaker indicated "*an atmosphere of fear and suspicion*" hung over this occurrence.

On May 30, 1991, Statnick confronted Sredzinski with the information Mayor Shoemaker shared with him and documented their conversation. Sredzinski told Statnick who the boy he was alone with in the cemetery was ("Witness #1") and that he was a high school junior at the time. Sredzinski claimed he picked up Witness #1 and took him to a Dairy Queen before driving to the cemetery to talk to him privately about some problems the boy was having. The incident with the police officer discovering them at the cemetery occurred around 10:00 p.m. Sredzinski stated he wanted the police officer to know he was in control of the situation and that nothing was wrong. Otherwise, he denied spending too much time with boys in the community, that various kids came to the rectory at night because they felt comfortable there, and that he was not, as the Mayor claimed, constantly with the three boys identified by Shoemaker.

Statnick instructed Sredzinski during this May 30, 1991 meeting that he was to have no further contact with young people outside of business hours and in public areas of the rectory. When Sredzinski requested time to adjust his customary way of interacting with the young people of the parish, Statnick told him he was to change his ways immediately.

Undated handwritten notes in Sredzinski's file included information regarding Witness #1; the young man Sredzinski claimed he was discovered alone with in the cemetery. Witness #1 repeatedly contacted the church regarding his concern over Sredzinski's relationship with Victim #1. Specifically, Witness #1 informed the Diocese that on the afternoon of June 18, 1991, Sredzinski took Victim #1 swimming at the Bridgeport dam. Victim #1 told Witness #1 that Sredzinski had "*roaming hands*" while they were swimming and could see that Sredzinski had an erection. Additionally, on June 20, 1991, Sredzinski took Victim #1 and another boy to Cleveland. Victim #1 told Witness #1 that Sredzinski made Victim #1 sit in the front seat of his car during the trip and held his hand like you would hold a girl's hand. Additionally, Sredzinski put his hand on Victim #1's leg and had Victim #1 put his hand on Sredzinski's leg. After this trip to Cleveland, according to Witness #1, Victim #1's parents told Sredzinski to stay away from their son.

¹¹ Diocesan notes indicate that the incident with the boy in the alley was discussed with his father. While the father indicated his son had spent time with Sredzinski and taken short trips with him on several occasions, he did not believe anything inappropriate occurred and that his son understood what a pedophile was and that nothing sexual had occurred. He also indicated that Victim #1 was always with him and Sredzinski when they were together.

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Significantly, Witness #1 informed the Diocese of his belief that that the boy in the car with Sredzinski at cemetery was Victim #1; meaning it was not Witness #1 with Sredzinski, as Sredzinski had claimed. Meanwhile, Witness #1 indicated Sredzinski never tried anything inappropriate or sexual with him.

Another undated handwritten page in Sredzinski's file included an incident conveyed by Witness #1 in which Sredzinski went to Witness #1's house one night and told him, with his face in his hands, that he was distraught that Victim #1 would not go out for ice cream with him.

There is a notation in Sredzinski's Diocesan file dated May 30, 1991 that Witness #1 called Father Statnick and told him it was getting worse and that Sredzinski took Victim #1 to Washington D.C. on a trip.

Handwritten notes appeared in Sredzinski's file dated July 23, 1991 document an interview with "Sister McCarthy." This interview appears to have been focused on McCarthy's knowledge of Sredzinski's behavior with young people. As she indicated, she worked with Sredzinski with Kindergarten through 8th grade students and that Sredzinski was very active at the school. She specifically noted that Sredzinski took four boys on a vocational trip (all of whom were named and none of whom included Victim #1 or appear to have accused Sredzinski of any impropriety). Notably, Sister McCarthy indicated she was asked by Sredzinski to tutor Victim #1. She mentioned an "altar boy situation" with Victim #1, although this was not further explained, and that the accusations she heard were primarily ones of Sredzinski being partial towards Victim #1.

An August 8, 1991 memorandum written by Statnick stated that Statnick met with Sredzinski to discuss the May 18, 1991 police incident report,¹² Sredzinski's trips with young people since their May 30th meeting, and the effect rumors regarding Sredzinski could have on the Church. Sredzinski explained that he went on the trips despite Statnick's instructions to restrict his contacts with young people because they were pre-arranged. Statnick stated that Sredzinski had broached a direct order regarding his conduct following their May 30th meeting by traveling with young boys.

Two letters written by Sredzinski to Victim #1 appear in Sredzinski's diocesan file. The first letter, dated June 26, 1992 and written on "St. Joseph R.C. Church, Everson, PA" letterhead, stated that Sredzinski was responding to a thank you note he had received from Victim #1 for a graduation gift Sredzinski had given him. Sredzinski stated there was another part of the gift, in that he wanted to take Victim #1 and his friend to Amish Country. Sredzinski wrote that someone had told him Victim #1 was not permitted to ride in his red car, but that when Victim #1 was ready, they would go together. Sredzinski also stated he had several items belonging to Victim #1 and that he could come by the rectory to pick them up. Sredzinski said he would be

¹² In an undated letter from Mayor Shoemaker to Bishop Anthony Bosco, Shoemaker stated Sredzinski had no police record in the Borough of Everson, suggesting the record involving Sredzinski was destroyed.

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waiting to hear from Victim #1 and would include his name on the new high school serving schedule.

A second letter dated September 8, 1992, also on "St. Joseph R.C. Church, Everson, PA" letterhead, stated, "*when you came to pick up your lantern I wanted to talk but I was speechless.*" Sredzinski went on to write that no matter what others may say, he was not mad at Victim #1 and still considered him his friend and that he also kept a picture of Victim #1 above his desk. Sredzinski also stated that the youth group was going to Colorado the following year and asked Victim #1 to join them.

On April 17, 2002, Father John Cindric wrote a memorandum to Statnick referencing an April 2, 2002 conversation between the two of them which also involved letters written by Sredzinski to Victim #1. Cindric stated he had letters provided to him by Witness #1 which Witness #1 indicated were from Sredzinski to Victim #1. Witness #1 also indicated that seven years prior, two similar letters were given to the Diocese (presumably the two letters described above). Additionally, Witness #1 informed Cindric of an incident in which Sredzinski took Victim #1 swimming one afternoon (presumably the incident described above in which Victim #1 told Witness #1 that while swimming with Sredzinski, he had roaming hands and could see that Sredzinski had an erection). Cindric indicated to Statnick that Victim #1's family would probably remain silent on the matter, but believed it needed to be brought to his attention.

On January 14, 1994, Bishop Anthony Bosco of the Greensburg Diocese wrote a letter to Sister Jolenta Sredzinski - Sredzinski's sister - in response to a letter Sister Jolenta apparently sent expressing concern over her brother being aggrieved by his treatment by the Diocese. While Sister Jolenta, via her brother, appears to have been told that Mayor Shoemaker was fully supportive of Sredzinski, Bosco informed her that it was the Mayor who had contacted the Diocese and initiated actions on their behalf to address Sredzinski's improper behavior. Bosco expressed that Sredzinski's conduct, contact with law enforcement, and rumors in the community had "*created great anxiety and concern in me.*" He repeatedly emphasized the danger Sredzinski's actions posed to the Diocese in terms of civil and criminal liability and to its leadership specifically, including Bosco. Bosco indicated the focus of the Diocese's response was to protect the Church and its reputation, with the interest of Sredzinski's possible victims being secondary. As Bosco wrote:

At no time did we conduct an investigation with any of the families precisely because we did not want to agitate the waters any more. Some families involved initiated contact with Father Statnick. He met with them at their requests, and took down the points of view they presented, most of which were supportive of your brother.

A March 18, 1994 memorandum to Sredzinski from Statnick addressed ongoing developments with Victim #1's father. According to Victim #1's father, Sredzinski filed a civil complaint against him for \$513.00 for unpaid tuition. Victim #1's father stated he believed this civil complaint was filed by Sredzinski because he would not allow his son to be around the priest. According to the memorandum, Victim #1's father further stated he would not reveal the

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matter that his son shared with him about Sredzinski. Statnick wrote that he told Victim #1's father that he investigated reports in the past regarding Sredzinski's contact with minors, but that any allegations made were withdrawn. Statnick further emphasized that he needed the information about what Sredzinski was alleged to have done to Victim #1 in order to take further action. Statnick documented that he tried to call Sredzinski twice about the matter, but could not reach him.

Around the time of Statnick's March, 1994 discussions with Victim #1's father, the matter involving Sredzinski and Victim #1 appears to have abated within the Diocese of Greensburg.

On April 12, 2002, a phone call was received by Father Lawrence Persico from a witness ("Witness #1"), the contents of which were provided to Statnick. Witness #1 claimed that Sredzinski abused a relative of hers in Brownsville, PA in 1985 and that Sredzinski should be looked into further. There was nothing otherwise noted in the file regarding this phone call, including whether there was any follow-up by the Diocese.

Three letters dated April 22, 2002, June 15, 2002, and August 4, 2002 from a witness ("Witness #2") to Bishop Bosco stated that Sredzinski bought Victim #1 presents, took him on overnight trips, to all night bowling, let him drive his car, and opened a bank account for him. She also said that Sredzinski had been caught by a police officer with a young boy in his car while parked in St. Joseph's cemetery. Witness #2 expressed her awareness that Sredzinski was obsessed with Victim #1 and even had the boy's picture on his desk, expressed her belief that the Diocese had a file on Sredzinski, and speculated that the family of Victim #1 must have been paid off by the Church.

According to notes in Sredzinski's Diocesan file, on April 9, 2007, the mother of a classmates of Victim #1 placed a telephone call to Persico and informed him that her son had told her that when he was in 7th or 8th grade, Sredzinski abused Victim #1. It was her understanding that Victim #1's parents tried to report the incident to Statnick when Victim #1 was in 7th or 8th grade, but that nothing was ever done about it. She also indicated that Sredzinski took Victim #1 and her son overnight to Seven Springs when they were young. Persico's response was that because Victim #1 was 28 years old at the time of the mother's call, Victim #1 needed to report any abuse by Sredzinski himself.

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