

Reverend Rudolph M. Silvers

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1949
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 3, 1975

Employment/Assignment History

5/21/1975-5/18/1980	Parochial Vicar, St. Sylvester, Pittsburgh, PA
5/19/1980-7/07/1982	Parochial Vicar, St. Robert Bellarmine, East McKeesport, PA
7/08/1982-6/28/1983	Parochial Vicar, St. Canice, Pittsburgh, PA
6/06/1983-6/15/1986	Assist. Dir. Vocation Office, Diocese of Pittsburgh Pastoral Center
6/16/1986-8/01/1986	Parochial Vicar, St. Peter, Butler, PA
8/02/1986-2/07/1994	Pastor, St. Peter, Butler, PA
2/07/1994-6/27/1994	Replacement Ministry, St. Vincent de Paul, New Castle, PA
6/27/1994-2/25/2002	Pastor, St. Ann, Bulger, PA
2/25/2002-7/24/2002	Leave of Absence
7/24/2002	Withdrawn from service

Summary

The first allegation of sexual abuse involving Father Rudolph M. Silvers occurred on November 14, 1988 when an 18-year-old male reported that Silvers had sexually fondled him when he was between the ages of 12 and 15. He further reported that Silvers pinned him down and had “taken advantage of him.” He stated that he felt overwhelmed and that people did not believe him. The victim subsequently requested counseling but was informed by Father Rutkowski that there were no funds available for counseling. Silvers denied the allegation.

On March 26, 2002, the victim met with Diocesan officials to provide details of his abuse by Silvers. He explained that his relationship with Silvers began when he was 13- years-old in 1977. His family lived across the street from St. Sylvester and the victim was one of the kids that hung around the rectory. He reported that it was not uncommon for Silvers to “*rough house*” with the boys and sometimes he would “*reach into the boys shorts and feel around.*” The victim stated that eventually this behavior evolved into more one-on-one activity between Silvers and him. He recalled that Silvers was a “*significant presence*” in his life and that Silvers would tease him in front of the other boys about his sexual inexperience. This made the victim feel inadequate compared with his peers. The victim reported that Silvers would rub his beard over his chest and nibble and lick the victim’s neck.

Summary

On one particular occasion when the victim was 15, Silvers became more sexually aggressive. He pinned the victim down by putting his arms behind him. Silvers then kneeled over him and reached down and grabbed his genitals. After this sexual assault, the victim's life spiraled out of control. He ran away from home several times but eventually graduated from high school in December of 1981. He then began counseling.

After years of moving from place to place and receiving counseling from numerous counselors, the victim decided to confront Silvers. In a letter to Bishop Wuerl, the victim recounted that sometime in 1993, he drove to St. Anne's in Butler to confront Silvers "*man to man.*" When Silvers saw the victim, he "*froze and turned white.*" The victim told Silvers how he screwed up his life because of what he had done to him and that his family knew and would be watching him. Silvers had nothing to say in response.

During the March 26, 2002 meeting, the victim made three requests: 1) That Silvers not be in ministry where he would have contact with children and harm someone else; 2) An apology; and, (3) that he be compensated for the years of counseling expenses he had incurred.

On April 15, 2002, Silvers was confronted with the allegations. He denied any sexual contact. When confronted with the fact that the victim had traveled to St. Anne's to confront him, Silvers became vague and evasive, claiming that while he had some recollection of the visit, he could not recall the content of the conversation.

Diocesan records contained several letters between the victim and the Diocese with respect to the reimbursement of funds for years of counseling. Eventually, on April 6, 2002, the Diocese forwarded a check to the victim in the amount of \$96,750.00 for compensation for counseling received from 1979 through the present. There was also a promise of future counseling, if needed.

A letter from the Diocese of Pittsburgh to the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office dated April 29, 2002 provided the name of the victim and a description of the allegations against Silvers.

The records provided by the Diocese contained a document entitled, "Chronology of Reverend Rudolph Silvers." In the chronology, there was an entry dated July 9, 1990 wherein a mother met with Father Gloninger in Butler to express her concerns with Silver's inappropriate and unnatural attachment to her 13-year-old son. There were several handwritten letters from her in the file about this subject. The mother asserted that her complaints about Silvers and his inappropriate interest in young boys was not being taken seriously. She reported that when her son was 14 years of age, Silvers called him at least three times per week and offered him various gifts. He also stayed overnight at the rectory without parental permission and no one was there except Silvers. She stated that Silvers was now showing inappropriate interest in another young boy, just like he did with her son, but the boy's family did not want to get involved. Her son also wrote a letter wherein he stated:

Summary

I am deeply disturbed about the issue with Father Silvers. I feel that this issue has been overlooked and needs much more attention . . . But I do know one thing and that is what Father Silvers is doing is wrong and should be stopped immediately before someone gets seriously hurt . . . This has been going on for a year and a half now and I have seen no progress. I find it hard to believe that a man can go on for so long and get away with it. Especially when he know what he is doing is wrong.

He ended the letter by writing, “*I feel that this matter better be looked into a lot more closely for Father Silvers’ sake and some other helpless kid.*”

In a file notation dated July 18, 1991, Gloninger wrote that he had reviewed the concerns of the mother about Silver’s association with young boys but that there were never any accusations of sexual misbehavior on the part of Silvers. However, a notation dated February 2002, revealed that Silvers was placed on administrative leave after a review of his confidential files. Silvers resigned.

A document dated October 20, 2004 and entitled “*Confidential File Summary*” was found in Silvers’ file. It stated:

Issue with [mother] and her complaint-file not clear. [Mother] was told that the matter was to be addressed on a “local level” -i.e. with Father Gloninger-7-27-90. Not clear if [mother’s] situation is ever properly addressed.

In a “*Confidential Memorandum*” to the file written by Rita Flaherty on January 20, 2012, she noted that she received a call on the 1-800 number from a male who reported that he was sexually abused by Silvers in the mid-late 1970’s at St. Sylvester when he was approximately 10 to 11 years of age. This victim stated that he was receiving individual counseling from a therapist at Catholic Family Services and would like assistance with the cost for counseling. The memorandum recounted that Flaherty advised the victim that the Diocese could assist him and ask for the contact information for his therapist. She also asked the victim to provide the details of abuse in writing for their records.

On January 31, 2012, the victim sent a letter pursuant to Flaherty’s request. He stated that Silvers would invite several boys to the rectory on Friday and Saturday evenings and that they would go down to the recreation area in the basement to play games. During these visits, Silvers grabbed at the boys’ buttocks and genitals. He would also grab them and pinch their chests. The victim reported that Silvers would get very excited during this “*horse play*” and that eventually he would take one of the boys up to his private living quarters and be gone for approximately 30 to 45 minutes. When they returned, the boy who had gone with Silvers looked very pale and would not talk for the rest of the evening. The victim reported that this conduct lasted a few years. He explained that he blocked out much of this time and did not currently recall whether he went to Silvers’ private quarters. He related that his brother once went to the private quarters but he refused to discuss what occurred there.

Summary

Diocesan officials confronted Silvers and read a portion of the letter to him that was written by the victim. Silvers stated that the allegations were absolutely false. While he acknowledged that minors came to the rectory basement for recreations, he stated that he would not tolerate such pinching and grabbing behavior. He also denied that anyone went upstairs to his private living quarters. He did recall that the victim and his brother had been altar servers. Silvers asked, "*What is [the victim] looking for?*" It was explained to him that the victim was looking for assistance with the cost of his counseling.

The file documents revealed that the Diocese of Pittsburgh paid approximately \$1,000 for 10 weeks of the victim's counseling. A letter from the Diocese to the Allegheny County District Attorney's Office dated February 3, 2012 provided the name of the victim and that allegations of sexual abuse against Silver had been made.

A memorandum from Bishop Wuerl dated July 24, 2002, was located in Silvers' file. It stated that on July 22, 2002, Silvers had written and requested permission to withdraw from active priestly ministry with the understanding that his priestly faculties would be withdrawn. Wuerl noted that he granted such permission in a letter to Silvers dated July 24, 2002.