

STATE OF NEW YORK
SUPREME COURT

COUNTY OF KINGS

CATHERINE P. GRENIER

SUMMONS

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Plaintiff,

Index No: _____

v.

DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN
a/k/a ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF BROOKLYN

and

SISTERS OF MERCY A/K/A AND D/B/A SISTERS
OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS, A/K/A AND D/B/A
INSTITUTE OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE
AMERICAS, MID-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY, INC.
A/K/A AND D/B/A MID-ATLANTIC
COMMUNITY, CONVENT OF MERCY A/K/A
AND D/B/A SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS,
MID-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY, INC. A/K/A
CONVENT OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Defendants.

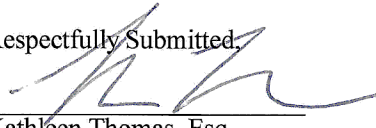
TO THE ABOVE-NAMED DEFENDANTS:

YOU ARE HEREBY SUMMONED to Answer the attached Complaint in this action and to serve upon Plaintiff's attorneys a copy of your Answer, or, if the Complaint is not served with this Summons, to serve a notice of appearance, on the Plaintiff's attorney within twenty (20) days after the service of this Summons, exclusive of the day of service, or within thirty (30) days after the service is complete if this Summons is not personally delivered to you within the State of New York.

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE in case of your failure to appear or answer, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the Complaint.

Dated: February 18, 2020
New York, New York

Respectfully Submitted,


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Attorneys for Plaintiff

STATE OF NEW YORK

SUPREME COURT

COUNTY OF KINGS

CATHERINE P. GRENIER

VERIFIED COMPLAINT

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Plaintiff,

Index No: _____

v.

DIOCESE OF BROOKLYN

a/k/a ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE

OF BROOKLYN

and

SISTERS OF MERCY A/K/A AND D/B/A SISTERS

OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS, A/K/A AND D/B/A

INSTITUTE OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE

AMERICAS, MID-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY, INC.

A/K/A AND D/B/A MID-ATLANTIC

COMMUNITY, CONVENT OF MERCY A/K/A

AND D/B/A SISTERS OF MERCY OF THE AMERICAS,

MID-ATLANTIC COMMUNITY, INC. A/K/A

CONVENT OF THE SISTERS OF MERCY

Defendants.

Plaintiff, Catherine P. Grenier, by and through her attorneys, Thomas LaBarbera Counselors at Law and Andreozzi & Associates, P.C., as and for their Complaint in this matter against Defendant Diocese of Brooklyn a/k/a Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and Defendant Sisters of Mercy, a/k/a and d/b/a Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, a/k/a and d/b/a Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Mid-Atlantic Community, Inc., a/k/a and d/b/a Mid-Atlantic Community, Convent of Mercy, a/k/a and d/b/a Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Mid-Atlantic Community, Inc., a/k/a Convent of the Sisters of Mercy (collectively "Defendants"), hereby alleges as follows:

Nature of the Action

1. Plaintiff brings this action against Defendants pursuant to New York's Child Victims Act ("CVA") (N.Y. C.P.L.R. § 214-g).
2. Upon information and belief, that this action falls within one or more of the exceptions enunciated in Section 1602 of the New York CPLR.

Parties

3. Defendant Diocese of Brooklyn a/k/a Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn (the "Diocese" or "Brooklyn Diocese") is a Catholic diocese created in approximately 1853 headquartered in Brooklyn whose territory encompasses the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens. The Diocese is a suffragan diocese of the Archdiocese of New York. The Diocese's principal office is located at 310 Prospect Park West, Brooklyn, NY 11215.
4. At all relevant times, the Diocese created, oversaw, managed, controlled, directed and operated parishes, churches, and/or schools of the Diocese, including Mater Christi Diocesan High School ("Mater Christi").
5. At all relevant times, the Diocese contracted with, hired, and/or otherwise engaged the Defendant Sisters of Mercy, a/k/a and d/b/a Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, a/k/a and d/b/a Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Mid-Atlantic Community, Inc., a/k/a and d/b/a Mid-Atlantic Community, Convent of Mercy, a/k/a and d/b/a Sisters of Mercy of the Americas, Mid-Atlantic Community, Inc., a/k/a Convent of the Sisters of Mercy (collectively the "Sisters"), for the purpose of assisting the Diocese in operating the Mater Christi Diocesan High School.
6. The Sisters is a religious order of women affiliated with the Roman Catholic Church with its administrative office located at 8403 Colesville Road, #400, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

7. At all relevant times, the Diocese oversaw, managed, controlled, and directed all priests assigned to work in parishes, churches, and/or schools of the Diocese, including Sister Juanita Barto ("Barto").

8. At all relevant times, the Sisters oversaw, managed, controlled, and directed all sisters assigned to work in parishes, churches, and/or schools, including Barto.

9. Plaintiff is an adult resident of Pennsylvania.

Jurisdiction and Venue

10. This Court has personal jurisdiction over the Defendants pursuant to NY CPLR § 302.

11. This Court, as a court of general jurisdiction, has subject matter jurisdiction over this action.

12. Venue in the County of Kings is proper pursuant to NY CPLR § 503.

Facts

Sexual Abuse in the Diocese and the Sisters

13. As is now well-known, child sex abuse by Catholic clergy was widespread, resulting in major sex abuse scandals involving Catholic dioceses and dioceses around the world, including those in Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and many other cities.

14. For many years, however, the scope of the Catholic child sex-abuse epidemic was unknown.

15. Thanks to an investigation in 2002 by the Boston Globe's "Spotlight" team, made more famous by the 2015 film *Spotlight*, the public is now aware that thousands of children have been sexually abused by Catholic clergy, and that many of those clergy-members were protected by Catholic officials.

16. The Brooklyn Diocese and the Sisters were no different.

17. Throughout the history of the Diocese and the Sisters, many clerics and nuns associated therewith have been accused of sexual misconduct and/or abuse.

18. The Defendants have thus been aware of the risk of sexual abuse by clerics for decades, well before the sexual abuse of the Plaintiff, which is described herein.

19. Sexual abuse of children within the Diocese and the Sisters was a known, preventable hazard, to which the Defendants failed to respond.

20. The Plaintiff's abuser was Sister Juanita Barto.

21. Upon information and belief, Barto was a sister, school administrator, and/or teacher under the auspices of the Diocese and/or the Sisters, and/or employed by the Diocese and/or the Sisters, to serve Catholic families associated with the Diocese, Sisters, and/or Mater Christi, including Plaintiff.

22. Upon information and belief, Barto began sexually abusing children before Plaintiff was abused by Barto.

23. Upon information and belief, the Defendants had actual and/or constructive knowledge regarding Barto's abuse of children prior to Plaintiff's abuse.

24. Upon information and belief, Defendants' officials and/or agents knew Barto was engaged in inappropriate behavior with children, before, during, and after Plaintiff's abuse.

25. Barto used her position(s) with Defendants to groom and to sexually abuse Plaintiff while Plaintiff was a minor-child between approximately 1966 – 1969 while Plaintiff attended Mater Christi.

26. At no time did the Defendants make Plaintiff or her family aware of Barto's and/or of the known risk of abuse posed by her and other Catholic clergy.

27. Barto used her position with the Defendants to sexually abuse the Plaintiff, including on the grounds of the Diocese and/or Mater Christi and/or property of the Sisters.

28. Defendants held Barto out to the Plaintiff and her family as the Defendants' agent, who had been appropriately vetted, screened, and approved.

29. The Plaintiff and her parents reasonably relied on the acts and representations of the Defendants.

30. The Plaintiff implicitly trusted Barto due to Barto's relationship to Defendants.

31. The Defendants' actions and omissions herein were willful, wanton, and/or reckless.

32. As a direct result of the Defendants' conduct described herein, Plaintiff suffered and will continue to suffer as follows:

- a. Severe and permanent emotional distress, including physical manifestations of emotional distress;
- b. Deprivation of the full enjoyment of life;
- c. Expenses for medical and psychological treatment, therapy, and counseling; and,
- d. Loss of income and/or loss of earning capacity.

Causes of Action

First Cause of Action Negligent Retention and Negligent Supervision

33. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges every allegation set forth throughout this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

34. Defendant(s) owed a duty of care to all minor persons, including Plaintiff, who were likely to encounter Barto in her role as nun, counselor, trustee, director, officer, employee, agent, servant, and/or volunteer of Defendant(s).

35. Defendant(s) owed a duty of care to all minor persons, including Plaintiff, to ensure Barto did not use her position to injure minors by sexual assault, abuse, and/or sexual contact.

36. Defendant(s) had an express and/or implied duty to provide a reasonably safe environment for Plaintiff and assumed the duty to protect and care for her.

37. Defendant(s) negligently, grossly negligently, and/or recklessly retained, and supervised Barto though they knew or should have known that Barto posed a threat of harm to minors.

38. Defendant(s) negligently, grossly negligently, and/or recklessly retained Barto with actual or constructive knowledge of Barto's propensity for the type of behavior which resulted in Plaintiff's injuries in this action.

39. Defendant(s) failed to investigate Barto's history of sexual abuse and, through the exercise of reasonable diligence, should have known of Barto's propensity for child sexual abuse.

40. Defendant(s) should have made an appropriate investigation of Barto and failed to do so, which would have revealed the unsuitability of Barto's continued employment and it was unreasonable for Defendant(s) to retain Barto in light of the information they knew or should have known.

41. Defendant(s) negligently retained Barto in a position where she had access to children and could foreseeably cause harm which Plaintiff would not have been subjected to had Defendant taken reasonable care.

42. In failing to timely remove Barto from working with children or terminate the employment of Barto, Defendant(s) failed to exercise the degree of care that a reasonably prudent person would have exercised under similar circumstances.

43. Defendant(s) knew or should have known of Barto's propensity for sexual assault, abuse, and/or sexual contact with minors, the same conduct which caused Plaintiff's injuries.

44. Defendant(s) knew or should have known of Barto's propensity for sexual assault, abuse, and/or sexual contact with minors prior to, or at the time of, Plaintiff's injuries.

45. The Plaintiff's sexual abuse by Barto was foreseeable, *i.e.*, Defendant(s) were on notice of prior similar incidents and Plaintiff's sexual abuse was the proximate result of Defendant(s)'s negligent retention, and supervision of Barto.

46. Barto's acts described herein were undertaken, and/or enabled by, and/or during the course, and/or within the scope of Barto's employment, appointment, assignment, and/or agency with Defendant(s).

47. Defendant(s) took no precautions to prevent Plaintiff's injuries.

48. Defendant(s) failed to take reasonable precautions to prevent Plaintiff's injuries.

49. Defendant(s) gave improper or ambiguous orders or failed to make proper regulations, and/or employed improper persons or instrumentalities in work involving risk of harm to others.

50. Defendant(s) failed adequately to supervise the activities of Barto.

51. Defendant(s) failed to protect against or warn the Plaintiff or her family of the known risk of clergy abuse.

52. Defendant(s) permitted, and/or intentionally failed, and/or neglected to prevent, negligent and/or grossly negligent conduct, and/or allowed other tortious conduct by persons,

whether or not their servants, and/or agents, and/or employees, upon premises or with instrumentalities under their control.

53. Defendant(s) allowed the acts of omission and/or commission and/or any or all of the allegations set forth in this Complaint to occur.

54. Defendant(s) actions were negligent, grossly negligent, willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, and/or outrageous in their disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff.

55. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant(s)'s actions and omissions, Plaintiff suffered and will continue to suffer injuries, as described herein.

56. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendant(s) is/are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally, and/or in the alternative, liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

**Second Cause of Action
Negligence/Gross Negligence/Recklessness**

57. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges every allegation set forth throughout this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

58. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty of reasonable care to protect the Plaintiff from injury.

59. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty of care because Defendant(s) had a special relationship with Plaintiff. Defendant(s) also had a duty arising from the special relationship that existed with Plaintiff, Plaintiff's parents, and other parents of young, innocent, vulnerable children to properly train and supervise clerics.

60. Defendant(s) special relationship arose because of the high degree of vulnerability of the children entrusted to their care. As a result of this high degree of vulnerability and risk of

sexual abuse inherent in such a special relationship, Defendant(s) had a duty to establish measures of protection not necessary for persons who are older and better able to safeguard themselves.

61. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty to protect Plaintiff from harm because each Defendant also had a special relationship with Barto.

62. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty of reasonable care because they solicited youth and parents for participation in their youth programs; encouraged youth and parents to have the youth participate in their programs; undertook custody of minor children, including Plaintiff; promoted their facilities and programs as being safe for children; held their agents, including Barto, out as safe to work with children; encouraged parents and children to spend time with their agents; and/or encouraged their agents, including Barto, to spend time with, interact with, and recruit children.

63. As a result of Plaintiff being a minor, and by Defendants undertaking the care and guidance of the Plaintiff, Defendant(s) also held a position of empowerment over Plaintiff.

64. Defendant(s), by holding themselves out as being able to provide a safe environment for children, solicited and/or accepted this position of empowerment.

65. Defendant(s), through its employees, exploited this power over Plaintiff and, thereby, put the minor Plaintiff at risk for sexual abuse.

66. Defendant(s) entered an express and/or implied duty to properly supervise Plaintiff and provide a reasonably safe environment for children.

67. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty to properly supervise Plaintiff to prevent harm from foreseeable dangers.

68. Defendant(s) had the duty to exercise the same degree of care over minors under their control as a reasonably prudent person would have exercised under similar circumstances.

69. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty to properly supervise Plaintiff to prevent harm from generally foreseeable dangers.

70. Defendant(s) owed Plaintiff a duty to protect Plaintiff from harm because Defendant(s) invited Plaintiff onto their property and Barto posed a dangerous condition on Defendant(s)'s property.

71. Defendant(s) breached its duties to Plaintiff.

72. Defendants failed to use ordinary care in determining whether their facilities were safe and/or determining whether they had enough information to represent their facilities as safe.

73. Defendants' breach of their duties include, but are not limited to:

- a. failure to protect Plaintiff from a known danger;
- b. failure to have sufficient policies and procedures in place to prevent child sex abuse;
- c. failure to properly implement policies and procedures to prevent child sex abuse;
- d. failure to take reasonable measures to ensure that policies and procedures to prevent child sex abuse were working;
- e. failure to adequately inform families and children of the risks of child sex abuse;
- f. failure to investigate risks of child molestation;
- g. failure to properly train the employees at institutions and programs within Defendant(s) geographical confines;
- h. failure to train the parishioners within Defendant(s) geographical confines about the dangers of sexual abuse by clergy;
- i. failure to have any outside agency test their safety procedures;
- j. failure to protect the children in their programs from child sex abuse;
- k. failure to adhere to the applicable standard of care for child safety;

- l. failure to investigate the amount and type of information necessary to represent the institutions, programs, leaders, and people as safe;
- m. failure to train their employees properly to identify signs of child molestation by fellow employees; and/or,
- n. failure by relying upon mental health professionals, and/or failure by relying on people who claimed that they could treat child molesters.

74. Defendant(s) also breached their duty to Plaintiff by failing to warn Plaintiff and Plaintiff's family of the risk that Barto posed and the risks of child sexual abuse in Catholic institutions. Defendant(s) also failed to warn them about any of the knowledge that Defendant(s) had about child sexual abuse.

75. Defendant(s) additionally violated a legal duty by failing to report known and/or suspected abuse of children by Barto and/or its other agents to the police and law enforcement.

76. Prior to the sexual abuse of Plaintiff, Defendant(s) learned or should have learned that Barto was not fit to work with children.

77. Defendant(s), by and through their agents, servants, and/or employees, became aware, or should have become aware of Barto's propensity to commit sexual abuse and of the risk to Plaintiff's safety.

78. Defendant(s) knew or should have known that they did not have sufficient information about whether or not their leaders and people working at Parish and other Catholic institutions were safe.

79. Defendant(s) knew or should have known that there was a risk of child sex abuse for children participating in Catholic programs and activities.

80. Defendant(s) knew or should have known that they did not have enough information about whether or not there was a risk of child sex abuse for children participating in Catholic programs and activities.

81. Defendant(s) knew or should have known that Defendant(s) had numerous agents who had sexually molested children.

82. Defendant(s) knew or should have known that child molesters have a high rate of recidivism. Defendant(s) knew or should have known that there was a specific danger of child sex abuse for children.

83. Defendant(s) negligently, grossly negligently, and/or recklessly deemed Barto was fit to work with children; and/or that any previous suitability problems Barto had were fixed and cured; and/or that Barto would not sexually molest children; and/or that Barto would not injure children.

84. Defendant(s)'s actions created a foreseeable risk of harm to Plaintiff.

85. Plaintiff was a foreseeable victim.

86. Defendant(s)'s actions were negligent, grossly negligent, willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, and/or outrageous in its disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff.

87. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant(s)'s actions and omissions, Plaintiff suffered and will continue to suffer injuries, as described herein.

88. By reason of the foregoing, Defendant(s) is/are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally, and/or in the alternative, liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

**Third Cause of Action
Negligent Training and Supervision of Employees**

89. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges every allegation set forth throughout this Complaint as if fully set forth herein.

90. At all times material, Barto was employed by Defendant(s) and was under each Defendant(s)'s direct supervision, employ, and control when she committed the wrongful acts alleged herein.

91. Barto engaged in the wrongful conduct while acting in the course and scope of her employment with Defendant(s) and/or accomplished the sexual abuse by virtue of her job-created authority.

92. Defendant(s) had a duty, arising from their employment of Barto, to ensure that she did not sexually molest children.

93. Defendant(s) owed a duty to train and educate employees and administrators and establish adequate and effective policies and procedures calculated to detect, prevent, and address inappropriate behavior and conduct between clerics and children.

94. Defendant(s) were negligent in the training, supervision, and instruction of their employees.

95. Defendant(s) failed to timely and properly educate, train, supervise, and/or monitor their agents or employees with regard to policies and procedures that should be followed when sexual abuse of a child is suspected or observed.

96. Defendant(s) were additionally negligent in failing to supervise, monitor, chaperone, and/or investigate Barto and/or in failing to create, institute, and/or enforce rules, policies, procedures, and/or regulations to prevent Barto's sexual abuse of Plaintiff.

97. In failing to properly supervise Barto, and in failing to establish such training procedures for employees and administrators, Defendant(s) failed to exercise the degree of care that a reasonably prudent person would have exercised under similar circumstances.

98. Defendant(s)'s actions were negligent, grossly negligent, willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, and/or outrageous in its disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff.

99. As a direct and proximate result of Defendant(s)'s actions and omissions, Plaintiff suffered and will continue to suffer injuries, as described herein.

100. By reason of the foregoing, Defendant(s) is/are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally, and/or in the alternative, liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

JURY DEMAND

101. Plaintiff demand a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

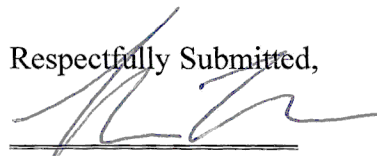
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WHEREFORE Plaintiff demands judgment against the Defendants on each cause of action as follows:

- a) Awarding compensatory damages in an amount to be proved at trial, in an amount that exceeds the jurisdictional limits of all lower courts which would otherwise have jurisdiction;
- b) Awarding punitive damages to the extent permitted by law;
- c) Awarding prejudgment interest to the extent permitted by law;
- d) Awarding costs and fees of this action, including attorneys' fees, to the extent permitted by law; and
- e) Awarding such other and further relief as this Court may deem just and proper.

Dated: February 13, 2020
New York, New York

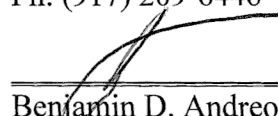
Respectfully Submitted,



Kathleen Thomas, Esq.

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Ph: (717) 525-9124 | Fax: (717) 525-9143

(NY Admission Pending)

Attorneys for Plaintiffs

VERIFICATION

STATE OF PennsylvaniaCOUNTY OF Monroe) ss:

Catherine P Greiner, being duly sworn, deposes and says: That she is a plaintiff in this action; that she has read the foregoing Complaint and knows the contents thereof; that the same is true to the knowledge of deponent, except as to the matters therein stated to be alleged upon information and belief, and as to those matters, deponent believes it to be true.

Catherine P. Greiner
[Name]

Sworn to before me this 14th day of February 2020 ~~2019~~.

[Signature]
NOTARY PUBLIC

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania - Notary Seal
JoAnn Misuraca, Notary Public
Monroe County
My commission expires April 8, 2022
Commission number 1113699
Member, Pennsylvania Association of Notaries