



Diocesan Profiles

ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON DC, 2010

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The Archdiocese of Washington D.C. was originally part of the Baltimore Archdiocese, but D.C. by virtue of being in the capital city of the U.S. and the site of the Apostolic Nunciature it became by 1948 a separate entity that included several Maryland counties around the District. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and its predecessors, the USCC all had headquarters in the city and served as the locale for annual meetings of bishops. The District is also the site of Catholic University and several training programs for Religious priests and nuns.

DC has long been the a geographical center for stories about sexual activity of clergy; they include: regular visits to 14th Street and DuPont Circle—DC's sexual Combat Zone—by staff members of the Chancery office, USCCB staff priests, seminarians and their teachers, and even clergy being treated at area hospitals for sexual abuse who are trying to change the object of sexual interest from minors to adults.

Even the orientation of several superiors has been questioned and stories bandied about within clerical circles: *Lady Wakefield*-Cardinal Baum was the object of many urban legends. [Cardinal McCarrick](#) * continues to be the subject of first-person reports and credible accounts of sexual involvement with seminarians and young priests. [Archbishop Wuerl](#) has come under suspicion by well-placed clerics originally because of the patronage of Cardinal Wright a notorious homosexual figure by some clerical accounts.

[Bishop Thomas Lyons](#), auxiliary in DC was originally a priest of Baltimore; I have personally interviewed adult men who claim that they were sexually abused by Lyons when he was a priest in Baltimore. One of the reporters was on probation for abusing minor members of his own family. He claimed that Lyons abused him from the time he was seven to seventeen years old. Also Lyons said that this happened to him (by a priest) when he was growing up and that "it was natural."

The following first-person account of Lyons sexual abuse when he was a Monsignor and pastor of a parish in the DC archdiocese speaks for itself. Michael Kevin Hagan hopes that his disclosure will assist any other victims of Bishop Lyons to come forward. His remarks were originally prepared to assist the passage of the Childhood Sexual Abuse Prevention Amendment of 2007.

Childhood Sexual Abuse Prevention Amendment Act 2007

Ladies and Gentlemen:



My name is Michael Kevin Hagan. I am 52-years-old and I live in Pennsylvania. I am here today to testify about the sexual abuse that was inflicted upon me in the summer of 1965. I am the fourth of nine children. I have seven brothers and one sister. I was brought up in a very loving and Catholic household. My family purchased a summer home in Longport, N.J. in 1963.

Longport was a small, tight-knit seaside town on the Jersey coast. It was a child's dream to spend summer days playing in the waves and playing basketball with my new friends and brothers at night. I knew even at that age that my parents had given me a paradise of sorts. I was a very happy kid and grateful to be there. Longport was inhabited primarily by large Irish Catholic families. As children we had what would be considered today as a great deal of freedom, but times were different then. Nobody locked there doors and everyone left their car keys in the ignition. It was a very safe place to be, or so I thought.

During the summer of 1965 I met a man named Monsignor Thomas Lyons. Monsignor Lyons was a priest from Washington D.C and vacationed in Longport. I never really understood why he came to Longport all the way from Washington, but he was well-known by all of the kids I knew, as well as their parents. He was a charming man of about age 42 who would spend all day on the beach playing with the kids. He knew how to play running bases, stick ball and taught us how to ride the waves. He would do tricks with us in the ocean. His big trick was to flip you over his shoulder. He would hold his hands between his legs and we kids would place our foot in his hands and he would flip us over his shoulder. Sometimes he had to wait for a wave or two to pass as he held your foot against him.

Monsignor Lyons would take us to play miniature golf and for Dairy Queen ice cream. All of the parents were only too happy to have such a good-natured priest be so kind to the children. In those days the fathers worked hard all week and came to the beach on the weekends. My dad spent most of his time with my mother. Monsignor drove a Chevy Corvair. He would let some kids steer the car while sitting between his legs as he manipulated the foot pedals with his feet.

I was always a very pious little boy and was very much taken by such a fine man who was even a monsignor. The monsignor in our parish at home was feared by all of the children.

One Saturday, after a day at the beach, Monsignor Lyons told me and two of my friends that he had to drive to Washington that night but that he would be returning the next night. He suggested that we three accompany him on his journey. He told us he had to tend to one of his sick parishioners but would return on Sunday night. He told us to ask our parents if we could go. My friends' parents agreed without hesitation since they had known the good father for years. My mother was a bit concerned, but gave in after the other parents had given permission. After all, it was Monsignor Lyons. It was to be a great adventure for the three of us.

The four of us drove straight to Washington and I remember it was raining when we got there. Monsignor Lyons was the pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish. It was across from a hotel. I believe the hotel was the Park Sheraton. Monsignor lived in the rectory. When the three of us saw the basement of the rectory we were amazed. It was a kids dream. It had pin ball, shuffle board and all kinds of games for kids. I remember thinking how lucky the kids of this parish were to have Monsignor for a priest.

After ice cream and sodas it was time for bed. Monsignor had a two room suite. There was a pull out bed in the living room area and his adjoining bedroom. Although it did not make sense to me, he said that there was only room for two in the pull out and that I would sleep in his room. I remember a feeling of panic when I was escorted to the bedroom and he shut the door. I will never forget the look on my two friends faces as we were separated. They seemed to sense something was wrong, but I had no idea what was going to happen.

When I got into bed I rolled over with my back to Monsignor. I remember being curled in a fetal position. After he was sure my buddies had quieted down for the night, I felt his arm wrap around me. I moved to the edge of the bed silently but he pulled me to him. He whispered to me as he fondled me. I felt his hard penis against my 10-year-old body. I was scared and confused and did not know what to do. I knew this was wrong but I submitted and he raped me in his bed. I was weeping but he continued to tell me that he loved me and that everything was good. I finally fell asleep in his embrace. As I write this I can feel his rough beard against the back of my neck and smell his bad breath.

The next morning my friends sort of snickered at me, but I was quite innocent at 10-years-old. Perhaps they were more aware of what was going on than I was. I did not tell them what had happened and I remained silent for many years. I thought that nobody would believe me and that I would be accused of smearing the good name of such a fine man. That morning was a whirlwind for us. We went to the National Zoo, The Washington Memorial and the Basilica on the campus of Catholic University. Doors were opened for us at every stop. Monsignor Lyons was a very influential man.

When I returned to my family's home in Longport I did not relate my nightmare to anyone. I told of all of the fun I had but I had been changed forever. I was robbed of my innocence by a predatory pedophile. It was my dirty secret which I kept to myself. In a perverse way I suppose I felt special that he had chosen me. Only he and I knew. It was never spoken about. I never did flips in the ocean with Monsignor Lyons again. I never let my five younger brothers get close to Monsignor Lyons or him to them. As I grew older I realized what the steering of his car was all about.

Monsignor Lyons was the superintendent of Catholic schools and later became a bishop in the Washington diocese. Though I wanted desperately to tell someone the truth about him, I knew no one would believe me. After all I was just a kid and he was somewhat of a celebrity. I remember him telling me that Vince Lombardi used to come to his early Mass when he was the coach of the Washington Redskins. I wondered what Coach Lombardi would have done if he had known the truth about Monsignor Lyons. He was invited to our house for dinner in Philadelphia for years after the incident. I thought he probably always wondered if I would tell. I never did.

I believed that I had gotten over the rape, but in my later years I have realized what a profound effect it had on me. I believe it has caused me difficulty with relationships and trusting in others through out my life. My view of authority and my parents was skewed. If they loved me so much and they were so wise, how could they have let it happen to me? I became very cynical at a young age. In one night, I went from an innocent little boy who trusted to suspicious kid who trusted no one. I began drinking alcohol when I was 13. By the time I was 15, I was a full blown alcoholic. I got into much trouble from that time on although I had never been in trouble before.

I made it through college and saw Bishop Lyons when he married one of my friends who had been on the pull out sofa that night. He was very gracious and I introduced him to my girlfriend. He was as charming as always. I acted as though nothing had happened and kept it buried inside of me. In a strange way I felt important that I was so close to this powerful and holy man. I suppose I was trying to impress my girlfriend.

When I became engaged, I even invited him to our wedding. Bishop Lyons had been hit in his car by a fire engine on its way to a fire in the Washington area. His injuries were quite severe. He lived a painful life in his last years. In a way I felt sorry for him, but at the same time I felt that maybe God was working in his own way. I still have a letter he wrote to me before he died in March of 1988.

In 1995 I was listening to an interview on National Public Radio about the long term harmful effects on people who had been abused by the clergy. I listened intently as caller after caller related their horrific lives that they attributed to the abuse. Fortunately I was able to find sobriety in 1983 and began what has been a 24 year recovery. I called the radio station and talked to the interviewer and guest who had written a book on the subject. They kept me on the radio and I was on for more than one hour. I told them that I felt proud that I had overcome the incident and made something of my life. It was a very freeing moment in my life. After more than 30 years I had told someone. I told them that I had been able to forgive this man and move on. I had become a husband, father, coach, business owner, sponsor, and citizen.

Soon after the radio incident I told my wife and several close friends that I had been abused by this priest. None of them really knew him. I never really talked about again but it was always there in the back of my mind.

When I had my own kids and would see them in church or serving as altar servers I never took my eye off of them. When I would play with them at the beach, which I did often, thoughts of the good Monsignor would enter my head. I believe I am a very tolerant man but cannot tolerate anyone who takes advantage of, abuses, or manipulates a defenseless child.

I have never told the many friends and family members who knew him when we were growing up. The people I told were given a vague description of what happened.

When the scandal of the Catholic Church's knowledge and cover up of wide spread abuse became public knowledge I became enraged. I have tried to bring my children up in a Catholic home but the churches cover up and perpetuation of abuse seemed almost worse than the act itself. My children all attended Catholic schools and I do believe that there are many good clergy who do good work. I am not here today to testify against the Church.

Several years ago I found the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests and I knew that I had to follow through to come to terms with the crime that had been committed against me as a child. I attended a SNAP seminar in Bryn Mawr, Pa. that was almost too much for me to bear. I have sought counseling in recent months and have peeled away many layers of hidden pain that I carried for more than 40 years. Being raped by a priest at ten years old shaped me in a way that God and my parents did not intend.

I agreed to come here today in the hope that my testimony will help me to find some type of closure to this traumatic experience in my life. It is also my hope that the bill to abolish the statute of limitations on such crimes against children will be passed so that someone not as fortunate as I will have the right to expose their abuser in open court. A statute of limitations cannot help victims – who are too young, too afraid, too confused, too embarrassed, and too innocent to speak up for them selves – to heal.

I have researched [Bishop Thomas Lyons](#) on the various lists of accused pedophiles and have not found his name. I am sure there will be many who will not believe my statements even today and will curse me for my words. I do not believe that I am his only victim and I hope my speaking up will give someone else who was abused the courage to come forward.

I know Bishop Lyons did many good works throughout his life, but he damaged me in a way that I still cannot fully comprehend. I would not be surprised if there is a parish hall, gymnasium, or even school with his name on it. I can't help but think what his other victims must feel when they pass by.

I am not here to seek revenge against Bishop Lyons. I am here to speak the truth. It is my hope that this council will pass this important legislation in the name of justice.

Thank you for listening and giving me the opportunity to be here today.

Michael Kevin Hagan

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