

# Church pays \$40K to settle abuse claims involving priest with Naples ties



Courtesy of  
bishopaccountability.org.

By *Ryan Mills* of the Naples Daily News

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**Editor's Note: This story has been corrected to say that Rev. John J. Whiteley Jr. has never been arrested or charged with a crime in either Collier or Lee county.**

A St. Louis man who accused a Catholic priest with Naples ties of sexually abusing him received a \$40,000 settlement from a Missouri diocese last month.

The check, from the Catholic Diocese of Jefferson City, was issued to David Clohessy on Aug. 19. Clohessy, 58, is the director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, an advocacy group based in Chicago. He accused the Rev. John J. Whiteley Jr. of sexually abusing him in the mid-to-late 1960s.

Whiteley, who has not served as an active priest since the early 1990s, lived for years in Collier County, most recently in the Naples Mobile Home Park off U.S. 41 North in Naples. However, neighbors and a park staff member said Whiteley recently sold his trailer and moved to the Miami area.

Attempts to reach Whiteley for comment were unsuccessful Thursday. He has never been charged with or convicted of a crime

in this case.

Clohessy first notified church officials around 1990 about the allegations, and in 1991 filed a lawsuit, which was tossed out by the Missouri Supreme Court because the statute of limitations had expired, according to a SNAP news release.

Clohessy said he again approached church leaders about his abuse allegations last fall.

He received the \$40,000 check last week, along with a settlement document that he said he signed releasing the church and its employees from threats of further lawsuits associated with his claims against Whiteley.

“After being contacted by Mr. Clohessy, representatives of the Diocese met with him and his wife at their home in St. Louis,” the Diocese of Jefferson City said in a prepared statement. “After the meeting, Bishop (John R.) Gaydos wrote Mr. Clohessy to extend to him an apology for the abuse that he reported.”

Whiteley worked exclusively at churches and hospitals in Missouri in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, according to the website BishopAccountability.org. He was placed on leave from the church in 1991, and “reportedly left the priesthood and became a flight attendant,” according to the website.

Whiteley has never been arrested or charged with a crime in either Collier or Lee counties, and has never served at a church associated with the local Diocese of Venice.

“It’s always eaten away at me,” Clohessy said of the alleged abuse. “I’ve spent a fortune on therapy. Still go from time to time. I still have tons of recovery work to do.”



#### **About Ryan Mills**

Ryan is a projects reporter and multimedia journalist, with a particular interest in crime, demography and religion. Over the last nine years at the Daily News, Ryan has served as a police and breaking news reporter, covered Rick Scott’s initial run for governor and spent three-

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plus years as a local news editor. When he's not at work, Ryan and his  
wife Megan are the parents of two young boys, Evan and Emmett.

Facebook @NDN\_RMills ryan.mills@naplesnews.com 239-263-4784

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