

## **Victims' lawyer releases his own list of credibly accused Fall River Diocese clergy**

**By Kiernan Dunlop / The Standard-Times**

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FALL RIVER — The Diocese of Fall River is being pressured to release a list of clergy credibly accused of sexually abusing a minor.

On Tuesday, Attorney Mitchell Garabedian, well known for representing sexual abuse victims in claims against the Archdiocese of Boston, released his own list of nine priests and one Catholic Church employee within the Diocese of Fall River that he says have been “accused of sexually abusing one minor in which this office has successfully brought child abuse claims against.”

In a statement he sent with the list, Garabedian said “As a matter of moral responsibility, it is time for Bishop da Cunha to immediately publicly list the names of credibly accused priests and Catholic Church employees who sexually abused minor children when working within the Diocese of Fall River.”

Not releasing the list, Garabedian said, is a re-victimization of sexual abuse victims, whereas releasing it will help sexual abuse victims try to heal and empower other victims.

In January 2019, the diocese announced plans to release a list of credibly accused clergy following an external review of their documents conducted by former FBI Assistant Director William Galvin.

The review has since been taken over by Kinsale Management Consulting.

In the past three months the diocese has announced the suspension of two active and two retired priests.

The priests were suspended, according to Director of Communications for the Diocese of Fall River John Kearns, to allow claims of alleged misconduct against them to be investigated further.

In response to a request for comment about Garabedian's list, Kearns sent a statement that said, "Work is now ongoing following this external review to prepare for the eventual publication of the list. It takes time and diligence to compile a list that is accurate and thorough."

In response to a Garabedian demand on Monday for the diocese to release the list on Monday, Kearns issued the following statement:

"The Fall River Diocese takes seriously its responsibility for the safety of children and its commitment to investigate any allegations of sexual abuse by clergy. The Diocese is conducting an inquiry into the allegations against Fr. Byington and Fr. Buckley and has notified appropriate law enforcement. As with any allegations, the Diocese is prepared to carefully examine any additional information that becomes available. In light of the Diocese's ongoing review, and pending any investigation by law enforcement, we cannot comment further."

The abuse the priests and diocesan employee on Garabedian's list were accused of occurred between 1947 and 1986, according to Garabedian, and the list includes the church assignment at the time of the sexual abuse.

Four of the clergymen listed by Garabedian were also included in a list released by then Bristol County District Attorney Paul F Walsh Jr. in 2002 of 21 priests accused of sexual misconduct in complaints to the Diocese of Fall River, according to an article in the Boston Globe.

The majority of claims against the 21 priests were beyond the statute of limitations and some were deceased.

The Globe reported that Walsh said he knew releasing the name of priests too old to prosecute would create controversy but the recalcitrance of church officials forced him to act.

The four priests included on both Walsh's and Garabedian's list include Rev. John P. Cronin, Rev. Edward O. Paquette, Rev. Gilbert J Simoes, and Rev. Raymond W. McCarthy.

Cronin was ordained in 1957, according to a 2014 obituary published in The Standard-Times, and served for many years as director of St. Vincent's Home, which offers child and family services, and as the director of all the Catholic

cemeteries in Fall River and New Bedford.

The list from Walsh said Cronin had three alleged victims and a Standard-Times article reports the claims were from the 1950s and 60s.

In 2002, Cronin said that he was reassigned to cemeteries after a woman came forward in 1991 and said she had an inappropriate sexual relationship with Cronin as a teenager.

He admitted “there was some truth to what she was saying,” but also said “I’m not a pedophile.”

Paquette was ordained in Fall River in 1957 and was forced by Bishop James L. Connolly to retire in 1980, the Standard-Times reported in 2002, following correspondence between Connolly and three other bishops indicating that Paquette had a problem and should be kept from children, especially boys.

Walsh’s list said Paquette, whose assignments included St. Kilian’s Church in New Bedford, had four alleged victims and a Vermont man filed a civil complaint against him for sexually molesting him as an alter boy in a Burlington Church in the late 1970s.

Simoes served as a priest from 1962 to 1986, according to The Cape Cod Times, and assignments included Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in New Bedford and Santo Cristo Church in Fall River, both of which had associated Catholic schools.

Simoes had six alleged victims and was suspended by the diocese in 1986, according to The Cape Cod Times, after which Simoes went on to teach Portuguese at Falmouth High School for a decade.

Three of the claims from Simoes’ alleged victims date back to 1964.

McCarthy, an Attleboro native, was ordained in 1954 and served at Sacred Heart Parish in Fall River, and later at St. Patrick Church in Fall River.

He had four alleged victims and civil claims were filed against him, according to the Standard-Times.

Of the six other individuals listed by Garabedian as credibly accused, Rev. James Porter is the most widely known.

Porter was sentenced to 18 to 20 years in prison in 1993 for sexually assaulting 28 children across Southeastern Massachusetts and publicly admitted to assaulting up to 100.

Though less widely known, Rev. Jose Avila's abuse was reported to be just as expansive as Porter's and he was also included in Garabedian's list.

Terry McKiernan, an advocate for Survivors First and BishopAccountability.org, told a crowd of demonstrators outside the Boston Archdiocese in 2003 that Avila abused an estimated 100 children during a 44-year career as a priest in Taunton, Fall River, East Falmouth, and New Bedford.

Avila also purportedly had a connection to another priest on Garabedian's list, at the same rally McKiernan said Simoes acted as Avila's assistant from the 1930s to the 1980s and they both abused children.

Details of abuse committed by Monsignor Maurice Souza at St. Anthony's Church in East Falmouth, another name on Garabedian's list, were reported by the Falmouth Bulletin last year.

An alleged victim settled a lawsuit against Daniel Cronin, the bishop of the diocese at the time, for failing to oversee Souza during his tenure.

The lawsuit alleges Souza abused the victim and a co-plaintiff beginning in the late 1970s when they were 9 and 10 continuing until Souza's retirement in 1986.

The plaintiffs received \$200,000 settlements.

Eight alleged victims of another priest on the list, Rev. James Nickel, reached an \$880,000 settlement with the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts religious order and Diocese in 2017, according to the Cape Cod Times.

The men were allegedly abused between 1972 and 1982 while they were between 10 and 20 years old and Nickel was a priest at Holy Trinity Church in West Hartwich and Our Lady of Annunciation Chapel in Dennis Port.

One of the men claimed he was sexually abused by Nickel about 50 times over 2 ½ years.

Not much information is available about Brother Thomas Mulryan or his alleged victims, but he was assigned to Monsignor James Coyle High School in Taunton in the 1960s.

Garabedian expanded his list past clergy to include Edward Lopes, a custodian or sexton at Santo Christo Parish in Fall River.

Lopes repeatedly sexually abused his male client, Garabedian said via email, from about 1959 to 1961, when he was 9 to 11 years old.

Garabedian released his list of credibly accused clergy in the Diocese of Fall River the day after he shared details about alleged abuse committed by Rev. Edward J Byington, one of two retired priests the diocese recently suspended from the ministry due to allegation of sexual abuse of a minor.

When he released the details of Byington's alleged abuse he said it was time for the diocese to provide a complete list of credibly accused priests.

When he sent out his own list Tuesday Garabedian said, "It is time to end the secrecy, provide transparency and act in a positive manner."