

Buffalo Diocese Persecutes Seminarian for Reporting Sex Abuse

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News:



by [Bradley Eli, M.Div., Ma.Th.](#) • ChurchMilitant.com • August 24, 2018

Whistleblower recounts how the diocese of Buffalo orchestrated his demise



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A former seminarian of the Buffalo diocese found out first hand that reporting clerical sex abuse of a minor would end his vocation to the priesthood.

In 1992, Wieslaw Walawender ("Wes") was in his third year of theology at Buffalo's Christ the King Seminary when he witnessed a 6-year-old boy running out of the office of his supervisor, Fr. Dennis Riter, at Queen of All Saints parish in Lackawanna, New York. The boy, Anthony, had semen on his head, face and shirt. The event was also witnessed by Anthony's paternal guardian, Tom, who along with Wes had been searching for Anthony.

After being urged to report the abuse to the diocese by his confessor and also by Anthony's legal guardians, Wes apprehensively wrote a detailed account of the event and hand-delivered copies of the letter to the secretaries of both the ordinary of the diocese, Bp. Edward D. Head, and the auxiliary bishop, Edward Grosz. No one from the diocese ever followed up with Wes about the abuse until the case, along with two others, went public this year. The incident was the beginning of a harrowing persecution, however, of Wes which ended in him being denied ordination.

Wes told Church Militant the backlash started right after witnessing the event and came even before he reported the abuse a few weeks later. These attacks included:

- His pastoral supervisor, Fr. Riter, never signed his final evaluation
- The diocese questioned him on well-documented mileage reimbursement
- The seminary not accepting his credits from theological studies in Poland

The problems would only get worse. Wes was immediately stationed for 10 weeks in an old building that had no heat or running water. His ordination to the diaconate was postponed. In spite of being a good student, Wes's academic program was postponed.

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The formation team started building a case against Wes, saying he didn't relate to women well, lacked pastoral sense and exhibited anger to one of the priests. It was left out that the priest, Fr. Charles Slisz, would, according to Wes, call Wes a "dumb pollack," act in a passive-aggressive manner towards him and refuse to pay Wes the normal stipend for pastoral work at his parish.

The final psychological attack came in 1995 when he was notified in writing that his ordination to the diaconate would be on April 27, 1995. After he arranged for his mother to fly from Poland to the United States to attend the ordination he was then he told that he would not be ordained.

He appealed directly to Bp. Head in 1995 and was told by Head, "I do not know you. I do not care to know you. And I will not ordain you based on the recommendation of my advisors."

What hurt Wes the most was having to tell his mother in person that he would not be ordained. When Wes recounted to Church Militant the moment when told his mother in person that he would not be getting ordained, he broke down and cried.



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