

# Bishop Accountability

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## Egan Resources – March 18–20, 2002

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### **Egan Reacts with Silence Documents Revealed How He Protected Accused Priests**

By Eric Rich  
Hartford Courant  
March 18, 2002

<http://www.ctnow.com/news/local/hc-egan0318.artmar18,0,7994213.story>

Cardinal Edward M. Egan maintained a resolute silence Sunday as concerned parishioners at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York reacted to revelations that, as a bishop in Connecticut, Egan allowed priests accused of sexual misconduct to remain in the ministry for years.

Egan's refusal to comment on his handling of allegations in his former diocese seemed likely to inflame criticism that, though the most visible ecclesiastical figure in the country, he has failed to assume a public role in the broader abuse scandal now roiling the church.

"He should come forward and address the allegations because it will get worse," said Dan Sullivan. Like others at the cathedral in New York, he had heard details of a report in The Courant on Sunday.

Inside, Egan offered a homily on the importance of faith and of loyalty to the church.

"We see that not all were able to hold on to their faith or certainly to live it as Jesus Christ would have," he said. "And this is why we have a church. We need to come together as a community."

Meanwhile, in Connecticut, a prominent state legislator called the revelations "pretty shocking" and, based on The Courant's report, said that Egan owes victims of sexual abuse in the Bridgeport diocese "at least" an apology.

"That's exactly how people are not supposed to handle those kinds of situations," said state Rep. Michael Lawlor, co-chairman of the legislature's judiciary committee. "It's the exact opposite of what you're supposed to do."

The Courant reported that Egan failed to thoroughly investigate abuse allegations, did not refer complaints to criminal authorities and - as recently as 1999 - allowed priests to continue working years after allegations of sexual molestation had been made against them.

It was also reported that Egan refused to believe multiple sex-abuse claims against a half-dozen clergy, and testified in sealed court documents that one priest's 12 accusers "have never been proved to be telling the truth."

The report was based on thousands of court documents that were part of the files in the largest sexual abuse scandal involving priests in state history. The documents, which have never been made public and are under a court-ordered seal, were obtained recently by the newspaper.

In Bridgeport, parishioners at the diocese's cathedral, St. Augustine's, said they were concerned and disappointed by the allegations against the man who was their bishop from 1988 to 2000.

"Do I think it's wrong? If he did it, yeah," said Otto Veglio, a lifelong Catholic and former altar boy. "I think he failed the church and I think he failed us if he did it."

Egan's successor, Bishop William Lori, has promised a zero tolerance approach to the sexual abuse of minors and recently announced a review of all 285 active priests and 86 deacons under its auspices.

"We're very blessed to have Bishop Lori," said John Campbell, 42, a parishioner at St. Augustine's. "When the smoke clears and all is said and done, the Catholic Church will still be standing. It has been for 2,000 years."

Indeed, Lori last month suspended the Rev. Charles Carr, one of three priests whose cases The Courant examined closely. Egan had suspended him in 1995 - allegations against the priest stretched back to 1980 - only to reinstate him to ministry at a nursing home several years later.

Egan's silence Sunday stands in sharp contrast to the outspoken role assumed by Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law, under fire for his own handling of a priest sexual abuse scandal.

Egan's spokesman, Joseph Zwilling, on Sunday reiterated the church's policy on sexual abuse charges. "If there is reasonable cause to believe the allegations and the victims don't object, we will refer cases to authorities," Zwilling said.

Beyond that, he declined comment. He told a swarm of reporters inside the cathedral that questions should be directed to the Bridgeport diocese. A spokesman for the diocese later declined comment.

Until Sunday, details of the claims brought against six priests in the Bridgeport diocese in the 1990s by 26 plaintiffs, some stretching back more than two decades, were largely concealed from public view. The sealed files revealed that, in addition to those, at least nine other priests faced sex-abuse allegations.

A confidential settlement reached one year ago, for a sum said to be roughly \$12 million, brought an end to all the litigation. As part of the settlement, the court file remained closed.

Lawlor said Sunday he believed the disclosures would improve the chances of passage this year of a bill that would extend the statute of limitations for criminal prosecutions of child molestation to 30 years after the victim's 18th birthday. The bill, as it is written, would apply retroactively - meaning some of the priests named in the Bridgeport cases could potentially face criminal charges.

"You can see the extraordinary lengths to which a variety of people, not just child molesters, went to cover this up," he said. "You can understand why people are reluctant to come forward. They're up against an organization that was prepared to go to great lengths to make sure this doesn't become public."

Outside St. Patrick's in New York, some parishioners said the allegations against Egan reflected a different era - a time when children's claims were more readily dismissed and pedophilia was not necessarily considered a permanent condition.

"We would all have handled it maybe wrongly," said Michael Fitzgerald, from Ireland.

Still, with less prominent clerics now moving swiftly against abusers, they said Egan must address the crisis facing the church if he is to retain his moral authority and credibility.

Dressed in the purple robe of Lent, Egan concluded his sermon with an invocation to St. Patrick.

"Help us to proclaim the strength and to live our life in the Holiness he has taught," he said. "Oh, Patrick, pray for us. Pray for the church."

Courant Staff Writers Dan Haar and Oshrat Carmiel contributed to this story.

### **Egan Mum on Conn. Reports Doesn't address handling of abuse by priests**

By Emily Gest with Jonathan Lemire  
(NY) Daily News  
March 18, 2002

Edward Cardinal Egan remained silent yesterday about a report that he mishandled sex abuse accusations against priests while he was bishop of Bridgeport, Conn.

As he spoke to worshipers at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Egan made no mention of the growing controversy sweeping the Catholic Church.

[Photo Caption - Gathering of Faithful: Worshipers crowd pews of St. Patrick's Cathedral on the holiday of its patron saint yesterday. Photo by Michael Schwartz.]

But sealed court documents revealed yesterday that Egan had allowed several Bridgeport Diocese priests accused of sex abuse to continue working in the church for years.

Copies of the court papers, obtained by The Hartford Courant, showed that Egan:

Failed to aggressively investigate some abuse allegations.

Did not refer complaints to authorities.

Suggested a dozen people who complained of rape, molestation and beatings by the same priest could have been lying.

"Allegations are allegations," Egan was quoted as saying in the court papers, adding that "very few have even come close to having anyone prove anything" against a priest.

"These things happen in such small numbers," Egan said during closed testimony. "It's marvelous when you think of the hundreds and hundreds of priests, how very few have even been accused . . ." No mention in homily He also said during depositions - taken in both 1997 and 1999 - that he didn't believe accusers had a right to know about any similar accusations against the same priest.

"We're dealing with them as a specific case, and I would have no reason to go into other people's concerns with them," he said, according to The Courant.

In his 10-minute homily at St. Patrick's yesterday, Egan lauded patriotism, faith and bonds of community without bringing up the issue of abusive priests.

Several parishioners said afterward they thought Egan was right not to raise the sex abuse issue at Mass.

But they expressed concern about the revelations in the court documents. "It's disturbing, it has to be looked into," said Rob Lewis, 35, of Tribeca.

"He owes an explanation to the public," said Denise Warner, 28, of Brooklyn.

Egan's spokesman, Joseph Zwilling, declined to discuss the Connecticut court papers.

He repeated previous statements that the New York Archdiocese has a "very good policy" for handling allegations of misconduct, and will report charges if the victim doesn't oppose it.

Joseph McAleer, a spokesman for the Bridgeport Diocese, declined to comment.

He said current Bishop William Lori announced last week he knew of "no priests or deacons in active ministry who pose any threat of committing sexual misconduct with a minor."

Egan was elevated to cardinal of the New York Archdiocese a year ago.

From 1988 to 2000, he was bishop of Bridgeport, where he fought lawsuits against six priests until the cases were settled for \$12 million to \$15 million last March.

The Courant story makes plain that at least nine others faced sex accusations but were never publicly identified. The court papers did identify three specific cases involving priests, including:

The Rev. Laurence Brett, who was sent out of state in 1964 after a sex incident with a teenage college student. High-ranking church officials explained Brett's absence by saying he had contracted hepatitis. They allowed him to continue as a priest. In 1990, Egan, aware of Brett's past, met with him and said he "made a good impression." When another allegation surfaced in 1993, Egan barred him from serving as a priest.

The Rev. Charles Carr of Norwalk, who was accused in 1990 of fondling boys. He was allowed to continue working until 1995, when he was named in a lawsuit. Egan reinstated Carr in 1999 as a part-time chaplain, but Lori later defrocked Carr after another allegation surfaced.

The Rev. Raymond Pcolka of Greenwich, who was suspended in 1993, after a dozen complains were made against him and he refused psychiatric treatment.

The revelations from Bridgeport follow a series of reports from California to Maine detailing scores of sexual abuse incidents and multimillion-dollar settlements. Nuns' accusations The Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens is also embroiled in its own scandals. A priest and his brother say that as children they were abused by a priest now working in Brooklyn.

In another case, three nuns in the Brooklyn Diocese who reported three priests had abused adolescent boys have said the diocese was slow to respond.

The diocese said it forced one priest to give up his duties, but it did not alert authorities or the nuns, the abuse victim or the priest's parish.

Brooklyn Bishop Thomas Daily was among the Boston Archdiocese leaders accused of keeping silent about sexual abuse allegations against defrocked priest John Geoghan.

### **Church Silence Now Deafening**

By Pete Hamill phamill@edit.nydailynews.com  
(NY) Daily News  
March 18, 2002

The odor of the scandal seemed to drift over the parade on Saturday, and for the first time in many years, the aching sounds of musical lament seemed absolutely fitting.

The St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York is now officially designated a Catholic parade, not an Irish celebration, and is the largest such annual event in the world.

[Photo Captions - Thomas Daily. John Geoghan.]

This year, the grand marshal was our own Edward Cardinal Egan. The march correctly memorialized those who died on Sept. 11. But for many who were watching on Fifth Ave. or on television, the day's gray drizzle and the sounds of the bagpipes combined to express the tragic mood of millions of people who make up the church. Once more, New York's Catholics mourned their valiant dead. But the wider

scandal would not go away.

The heart of the scandal, of course, is priestly pedophilia. That's a fancy word for raping the young. Under New York State law S. 130, every case of an adult (over 21) having sex with a person under 17 is statutory rape, a class E felony. It doesn't matter if the victim gave his or her consent. It doesn't matter if the rapist is homosexual or heterosexual. It doesn't matter if the event took place in a seminary, a rectory or the roof of a housing project. The crime is rape.

In addition, paying hush money, coercing witnesses, destroying or burying relevant documents and arranging to move the rapist out of the state are acts called obstruction of justice. These are not trivial crimes. They are felonies.

And now evidence is arriving from all over the country that these interconnected crimes have been going on for decades. In recent months, there have been reports about priestly pedophilia from Palm Beach, Fla.; East Meadow, L.I.; Pittsburgh; St. Louis; Tucson, and a dozen other places in what seems to be an epidemic.

Even if the percentage of such priests is relatively small, the cost is enormous. Over the past 17 years, the church has paid out an estimated \$1 billion to settle these and other cases - money that could have been spent on schools or care of the poor.

The most vile case - so far - is the one in Boston, of course, where a serial rapist named John Geoghan, a Catholic priest since 1962, went his nasty way for more than 30 years, victimizing at least 130 boys. By his own admission, he twice raped a 10-year-old boy. In a courtroom this year, defrocked and disgraced, his face grizzily with white whiskers, Geoghan looked like he'd trained for his priestly duties at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. He is now in a Massachusetts prison cell, but his victims are serving a life sentence.

The larger context of his criminal past is more troubling. Geoghan was enabled in his career by many others, all of them bureaucrats in the church hierarchy. After each new charge, and each new retreat into rehab, Geoghan was sent on to another parish. It was as if the church bureaucrats were trying to prove they were environmentalists, by recycling garbage. 7 related victims Sadly, among his enablers was Bishop Thomas Daily, now head of the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens. In 1977-78, while serving at St. Andrew's in Jamaica Plain, Mass., Geoghan molested seven boys in the same family. Lawsuits were filed. The church settled, and then sealed the records. Daily, then the bishop there, put Geoghan on sick leave. It's not known if Daily knew that Geoghan had left three previous parish assignments because of sexual acts with boys. If he didn't know, he was naive or incompetent. There are, after all, limits to Christian compassion.

Geoghan underwent psychoanalysis and counseling for a year, then ended up at St. Brendan's in Dorchester. Once again, the predator went after little boys, and once again - in September 1984 - he was removed from the parish. By then, his lengthening ecclesiastical rap sheet should have caught the attention of Daily or the new archbishop, Bernard Law. If it did, nothing happened. Two months after his removal from the Dorchester parish, Geoghan was assigned to St. Julia's in Weston. Among his other duties - you can't make this stuff up - he was put in charge of the altar boys.

Daily has yet to say much about this (other than referring calls to his Boston lawyers), but he's not alone in his discreet silence. There is much to be told by Egan.

Yesterday, The Hartford Courant newspaper published a detailed account of Egan's testimony in lawsuits over sexual abuse by priests in the Bridgeport Diocese. (All took place before Egan assumed command of the diocese, but he was forced to defend the diocese in the lawsuits.) Seamy details of priestly abuse "These things happen in such small numbers," Egan said in a deposition. "It's marvelous when you think of the hundreds and hundreds of priests, how very few have even been accused, and how very few have even come close to having anyone prove anything. Claims are not of interest to me. Realities are. Claims are claims. Allegations are allegations."

He was asked about charges against the Rev. Raymond Pcolka, who was accused by more than a

dozen people with sexual abuse of boys and girls that went back decades. The details included anal sex, violence and sadistic language. Pcolka was also accused of having a girl perform oral sex on him on her seventh birthday. Egan responded to the question:

"I am not aware of any of those things. I am aware of the claims of those things, the allegations of those things. . . . I am aware that there are a number of people who know one another, some are related to one another, have the same lawyers and so forth, I am aware of the circumstances, yes."

In other specific cases, he answered in the same way: Allegations are not proof. And, of course, he was correct. But the decision to take such charges seriously can't be left to the inner circle of the church - not the Catholic Church, not any church. Cases of rape and obstruction of justice must be decided by the secular society, by district attorneys and grand juries.

And there is another issue here. The Catholic Church is an extraordinary institution. It provides consolation for millions of human beings. Thousands of its priests and nuns do heroic work on many levels. I've seen them laboring in the worst places in Latin America, and my friends have seen them at work in the otherwise godforsaken villages of central Africa.

But this epidemic of pedophilia could cause ferocious damage to that church. Seminaries are already closing in Ireland, for want of candidates for the priesthood. Church attendance and contributions could erode. Some parents say they even fear sending children to Catholic schools.

The issue must be addressed with candor and humility and pity. Egan and Daily could lead the way. They could vow to report all allegations to the cops. They could ask for the quick convoking of a Vatican III, similar to the Second Vatican Council made up of the church's leadership that Pope John XXIII convened to reevaluate the church's role. The new council can meet if not under the current Pope, then under the next one - and have the worldwide church debate the tortured question of priestly celibacy. In this crisis, they can't get cute with legal language. And they don't really have the option of silence.

## **Statement**

By Cardinal Edward Egan  
March 19, 2002

<http://www.ny-archdiocese.org/statement0319.cfm>

Sexual abuse of children is an abomination. It leaves scars on its victims that long endure. My heart goes out to any and all victims and their families.

A letter is being prepared for the faithful of the Archdiocese of New York on the tragedy and immorality of sexual abuse. There will be in this letter a detailed outline of how the Archdiocese of New York responds to accusations of sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse of children is not only immoral it is also illegal. Along with the District Attorneys, I believe that allegations of abuse should be reported to the proper civil authorities, and I urge anyone who has an allegation to bring it immediately and directly to the civil authorities. If such allegations are made first to the Archdiocese, we will encourage the person making the allegation to report that allegation to the proper civil authorities.

In the Archdiocese of New York, we will continue to enforce the policy of the Archdiocese to thoroughly investigate all allegations and respond appropriately and pastorally to the person bringing the allegation and to the clergyman. In any such investigation, of course, we have to respect the rights of all persons involved, the rights of the accuser as well as the rights of the accused. As has been made clear, when there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred and if the victims do not oppose the reporting, the Archdiocese will make the appropriate reports to civil authorities.

Recently, an area newspaper published a story concerning how three sexual abuse cases were handled in the Diocese of Bridgeport. There was immediate request for a reaction from me as the former Bishop of Bridgeport. Since that story omitted certain key facts and contained inaccuracies, it was necessary to review the cases in detail before responding. Having completed the review, I am confident that these cases were handled appropriately. The salient and essential facts of this matter will be touched upon in my upcoming letter.

Our children are to be protected always, and in this the Archdiocese will be ever vigilant.

### **Collared - Post Finds 'Missing' Sex Scandal Priest Back in the Classroom and on the Altar**

By Douglas Montero  
New York Post  
March 19, 2002

A Catholic priest, accused of molesting a boy five years ago, is listed on church records as being on "leave" - but The Post has discovered he's working in a upper Manhattan church.

The revelation comes as the sex-abuse scandal in New York's Catholic Church system widens amid charges that it covers up or disregards allegations of sexual abuse against priests.

[Photo Caption - Rev. Henry Mills.]

The priest, the Rev. Henry Mills (right), who was pulled from parish work in 1997 after he was accused in a lawsuit of raping a 17-year-old parishioner, celebrates public Masses at St. Elizabeth's Church in Washington Heights and, on rare occasions, fills in as a teacher at the parish school.

"He sometimes teaches when they need him in one of the grades," said a woman who answered the telephone at the parish elementary school.

Archdiocese spokesman Joseph Zwilling said he had no comment. For the past three years, the Official Catholic Directory, which details the names of all priests and churches, has listed Mills as "Absent on Leave," indicating he doesn't have any ministerial duties.

The Mills case appears to exemplify the type of potential trouble the Archdiocese of New York seems to invite whenever it tries to secretly handle sex-abuse allegations lodged against its priests.

John E. Fitzgerald, a lawyer who worked with the boy before the lawsuit was filed, said the Archdiocese of New York's policy makes it almost impossible to resolve a sexual-abuse claim without a lawsuit because the policy is "driven by defense attorneys and insurance adjusters."

Luis Guzman claims in the 1997 suit that Mills allegedly gave him booze and raped him during a "counseling" session at Christ the King Church in The Bronx, and later at St. Joseph of the Holy Family Church in Harlem.

Mills allegedly coerced Guzman into more encounters by threatening to tell his devoutly Catholic family about their relationship. But when Guzman confronted Mills, he and the archdiocese tried to cover up the incident, the lawsuit said.

Guzman claims he tried to negotiate with the church - even going to psychiatrists the archdiocese had recommended because "he simply wanted the church to listen, do a real investigation and find out the truth," said lawyer Deborah Pearl Henkin, who's handling the suit.

Mills referred questions to his lawyer, Joseph Marra, who said his client is innocent but refused to say why Guzman would single out Mills. The case is pending.

After the lawsuit was filed, Mills was relieved of his duties, officially put on "leave" and went to an upstate facility for therapy. Henkin claims the therapy was to treat a sex-abuse problem, while Marra said Mills was treated for trauma triggered by the accusation.

Shortly after, Mills moved into the rectory at St. Elizabeth's, simply as a place to live.

But he gradually returned to ministering to the people.

Monsignor Gerald T. Walsh, the church's pastor, whom I believe and trust because he is a very close family friend, defended Mills, who was already working in the parish when Walsh took over.

"Father Mills is well respected in this community, and people ask him to perform their weddings as an indication of that respect," said Walsh. "We operated on the principle that you're innocent until you're proven guilty."

### **Report All Abuse, DA Urges Church Wants law to apply to clergy & others**

By Barbara Ross and Robert Ingrassia with Joe Mahoney, Bill Farrell and News Wire Services  
(NY) Daily News  
March 19, 2002

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau stepped into the Catholic Church's priest sex abuse scandal yesterday by publicly urging the Archdiocese of New York to report all child molestation cases to his office.

After huddling over the weekend with his top advisers, Morgenthau also called for revising state law to require the clergy to report sex abuse complaints.

He urged expanding the statute to cover instances of abuse beyond the family setting.

"I would expect the Archdiocese of New York to make available to my office all allegations of child abuse, including any past allegations involving priests where the priest is still active or has retired in the last several years," Morgenthau said.

Archdiocese spokesman Joseph Zwilling could not be reached for comment after Morgenthau issued his statement.

Edward Cardinal Egan has repeatedly declined to discuss sexual abuse. Gap in legislation State law requires doctors, teachers and social workers, but not the clergy, to inform law-enforcement agencies about allegations of child sexual abuse.

Morgenthau said during an interview with the Daily News that he interprets the law to apply only to sexual abuse within a family. He said the law should be expanded to make clear that all abuse allegations, including those involving teachers, coaches, scout leaders and others, must be reported.

"The reporting requirement should cover all instances of child abuse and should not be limited," he said. "It has to be broadened to include third parties."

Gov. Pataki said yesterday that he would support adding clergy to the reporting law.

"Child abuse is a very serious crime," he said. "I think it's important that everyone understand that, and when they have knowledge of a crime, that they take appropriate steps."

Staten Island District Attorney William Murphy said the church must relinquish its role as judge and jury on sex abuse cases.

"No one in the hierarchy of the church has the authority we have as prosecutors to protect the greater

society," he said. "I don't see how the church can hold that position for itself."

Morgenthau said the archdiocese has cooperated in the past, most notably in the prosecution more than a decade ago of Covenant House founder the Rev. Bruce Ritter.

In urging the church to turn over past complaints, Morgenthau was gentler with archdiocesan officials than some of his counterparts in other boroughs and across the country who have demanded that they be informed about abuse allegations.

Brooklyn District Attorney Charles Hynes and Bronx prosecutor Robert Johnson have made it clear they don't want church officials sweeping reports of sexual abuse under the rug.

"If there are allegations of criminal activity, we want to hear about it," said a spokesman for Hynes, who is seeking a meeting with Brooklyn diocesan officials to discuss the issue.

Many states, including Connecticut and New Jersey, include clergy in laws mandating that molestation allegations be reported to authorities.

In Connecticut, a prosecutor said yesterday he is investigating whether church officials in Bridgeport, where Egan was bishop for more than a decade, complied with the reporting law.

"We're taking a look at it," Bridgeport State's Attorney Jonathan Benedict said.

But he noted that cases of abuse within the diocese happened in the 1980s, making it likely that the statute of limitations has run out on any reporting failures.

Egan not investigated

Benedict stressed that his office was not investigating Egan, who served as bishop of Bridgeport from 1988 until 2000.

The Hartford Courant reported Sunday that sealed court documents indicate Egan allowed several priests facing allegations of sexual abuse to continue working.

The newspaper said the documents indicate Egan didn't aggressively investigate some abuse allegations and did not report complaints to police.

Earlier yesterday, Zwilling said the archdiocese would have no comment on The Courant's story.

Lawyer Jason Tremont, who helped negotiate a settlement between abuse victims and the Bridgeport diocese last year, called yesterday for the diocese to release the names of priests accused of molesting kids.

"They have to open up everything because we do know there has been a coverup," he said. "In order to have credibility in dealing with future claims, they have to go through their complaints and come clean with everything."

## **Ex-Canon Lawyer Egan Now Facing Tough Criminal Cases**

By Robert Ingrassia  
(NY) Daily News  
March 19, 2002

As Edward Cardinal Egan confronts questions about pedophile priests, he may find himself relying more on the sharp legal mind he honed as a canon lawyer.

Long before he became a cardinal, Egan served for 14 years as a church judge in Rome. He also holds a doctorate in canon law from Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, the top school for the

study of church law.

Although Egan never studied criminal or civil law and is not a member of the bar, his legal background may help him navigate the sea of sexual-abuse allegations that have swamped the church.

"His training as a canon lawyer makes him very conscious of the rights of the accused and the rights of the accuser," said Nicholas Cafardi, a canon lawyer and dean of Duquesne University School of Law in Pittsburgh. "He's trained to see both sides of every case."

Egan came under fire this week when the Hartford Courant reported that he failed to aggressively investigate some abuse allegations and did not refer complaints to police.

The paper, which obtained copies of documents sealed when the Bridgeport (Conn.) Diocese settled a series of abuse lawsuits, reported that Egan allowed priests accused of molesting minors to continue working.

His legal way of thinking was evident in a series of depositions taken as part of the Bridgeport litigation. In partial transcripts printed by the Courant, Egan goes head to head with lawyers for people suing the diocese.

Like any good litigator, he splits hairs over terms and sticks to his guns as a lawyer grills him about accusations that 12 altar boys and parishioners were abused.

"Let us please remember that the 12 have never been proved to be telling the truth," Egan says during a 1999 deposition.

At one point, a lawyer asks him whether he is aware that one case against a priest involves oral sex and sodomy.

"I am not aware of any of those things," Egan says. "I am aware of the claims of those things, the allegations of those things."

In another exchange, he is asked whether the instances of sexual abuse within the church are increasing.

"Over time, the allegations have increased," he responds, before adding, "Did you hear that? Not instances - your word was instances."

Egan also displayed his legalistic approach in another sexual-abuse case, testifying at one point that priests should be considered independent contractors that are the responsibility of parishes, not the diocese.

Egan's experience was as a judge on the Tribunal of the Sacred Roman Rota, an appeals court of sorts within the Roman Catholic Church.

The court mostly hears annulments and interprets canon law, not civil or criminal law. The court occasionally deals with property disputes.

Catholic canon law has a penal process to handle crimes against the church, such as heresy, misuse of sacred objects and even sexual relations between priests and children.

But Cafardi said the penal process is seldom used.

"When you're studying canon law, penal process is not something you spend a lot of time on because cases are so rare," he said.

### **Shield Kids, Not Clerics, Say Experts**

By Jose Martinez  
(NY) Daily News  
March 19, 2002

The Catholic Church needs to tackle allegations of clerical sexual abuse head-on, rather than dealing in silence, several church experts and academics said yesterday.

"The church needs to circle its wagons in a pastoral way, not around the priests," said Karen Sue Smith, editor of Church magazine. "People feel forsaken at the expense of protecting the priests."

With the scandal surrounding pedophile priests continuing to swirl, some of the people contacted by the Daily News - including academics and a former priest - called on the church to be more vigilant against perversion within the priesthood.

"These people have acted like the heads of corporations since this first began to emerge as a problem," said Eugene Kennedy of Chicago, who served as a Maryknoll priest for 22 years. "They've followed the advice of lawyers, public relations counsel and insurers to protect assets.

"But their real role is to be pastors that protect their flock - especially their youngest members," said Kennedy, the author of "The Unhealed Wound: The Church and Human Sexuality."

Added vigilance could come through the required reporting of sex abuse by clergy members - similar to the way some other professions are monitored - or tightened in-house efforts by church dioceses to monitor their priests.

Margaret O'Brien Steinfelds, editor of Commonweal, a magazine edited by lay Catholics, said mandatory reporting requirements should be put in place.

"That, to me, seems pretty obvious," she said. "You just don't get into these questions - you report them."

William Donohue, president of the Catholic League, said: "When in doubt, you certainly turn over the names of the priests to authorities. You don't want to see innocent people having their reputations ruined."

Mary Ann Glendon, a Harvard law professor who serves on two Vatican commissions, pointed out that the church also needs to examine a homosexual subculture within its seminaries that can scare off prospective priests.

"There are many young men who walk into the seminary and say, 'Whoops, this isn't for me,' " she said.

### **Excerpt of Egan Deposition**

Hartford Courant  
March 20, 2002

<http://www.ctnow.com/news/specials/hc-egan-depo,1,279497.story?coll=hc-headlines-home>

Excerpt from Egan's 1999 deposition, under questioning by attorneys for plaintiffs who claimed they have been sexually abused by priests in the Bridgeport Diocese, where Egan was bishop from 1988 to 2000:

QUESTION: "Okay. So let me ask you this question. Do you know of any instance since you have been bishop, that anyone on your behalf or any official within the diocese has made a report to the authorities because of a suspicion that a Bridgeport Diocesan priest sexually abused a minor?"

EGAN: "I have no such knowledge. However, I could imagine that a case could go to somewhere

else, to a hospital or something of that sort, and somebody else could report it. But I have no such case."

QUESTION: "If someone within the diocese were to have reported to the authorities that a priest within the diocese ..."

EGAN: "Uh-huh."

QUESTION: "... was suspected of committing an offense against a child, would that be something you would have to be made aware of?"

EGAN: "You said a priest?"

QUESTION: "Correct."

EGAN: "Yes, it would"

QUESTION: "Okay. As you sit here today, you know of no instance in which anybody within the diocese has made such a report to the police or the authorities?"

EGAN: "You're correct."

QUESTION: "What is your understanding as to when such a report has to be made to the authorities?"

EGAN: "I believe it should be made immediately."

QUESTION: "In other words, under what circumstances? Any time that someone hears about ..."

EGAN: "Oh, I see."

QUESTION: "... a suspected clergy sexual abuse instance against a child?"

EGAN: "That's right."

QUESTION: "So any time that a person within the diocese, personnel, official, et cetera, learns of that, pursuant to both the written policy of the diocese and Connecticut state law, they would have to go to the authorities with that information?"

EGAN: "You are correct."

### **Egan Breaks Silence Calls Pedophilia An 'Abomination,' But Critics Say Statement Lacks Substance**

By Rinker Buck  
March 20, 2002  
Hartford Courant

<http://www.ctnow.com/news/politics/hc-nypriest0320.artmar20.story?coll=hc-headlines-politics-state>

NEW YORK -- New York Cardinal Edward M. Egan, breaking his long-standing silence on sex abuse by members of the clergy, Tuesday released a statement labeling pedophilia an "abomination" and encouraging "anyone who has an allegation to bring it immediately and directly to the civil authorities."

Egan was circumspect, however, on one point that has caused a furor within his diocese and American Catholicism ever since the national wave of reports of sex abuse by priests began to cascade earlier this year: the precise circumstances under which the church is obligated to report cases of abuse.

While saying authorities should be made aware of abuse allegations, Egan stopped short of pledging

that the church would, in every case, report them. He allowed that in some circumstances the diocese would decide whether there were sufficient grounds to make such a notification.

"As has been made clear, when there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred and if the victims do not oppose the reporting, the Archdiocese will make the appropriate reports to civil authorities," Egan said.

Egan also took the opportunity to respond, for the first time, to a Courant story published Sunday that described how, as bishop of Bridgeport from 1988 to 2000, Egan kept in place several priests facing multiple accusations of sexual abuse and did not report complaints against clergy to the authorities. The story was based on thousands of pages of sealed documents and testimony from civil suits against six priests.

Saying the story "omitted certain key facts and contained inaccuracies," Egan added that he is "confident that these cases were handled appropriately." A spokesman for the cardinal declined to elaborate, saying he would provide more details in a forthcoming letter to New York parishioners.

Egan's one-page statement followed three days of unrelenting criticism by prosecutors, politicians and newspaper columnists, many of whom condemned the church's reflexive policy of silence and its record of not being forthcoming with the public and prosecutors about sexual abuse cases. His response to the crisis - and the questions raised about his personal handling of the Bridgeport cases - is important because the archbishop of New York has traditionally been considered the spiritual leader and voice of American Catholicism.

Egan's reluctance to speak out on the issue is in contrast to some other bishops, including his successor in Bridgeport, William Lori, who held a press conference Tuesday night to field questions about how his diocese intends to deal with sex-abuse complaints.

Lori did not criticize Egan's handling of the abuse cases. Instead, Lori praised Egan for his overall leadership, saying, "He left behind a magnificent diocese."

When pressed to explain some of Egan's actions, Lori said: "I'm only here to answer for the way I've responded in the past year and how I'm going to respond in the year going forward. We can all have 20/20 hindsight."

The Courant's story, based in part on transcripts of closed-door testimony by Egan, showed how the then-bishop openly questioned the veracity of a dozen people who accused one priest of rape, molestation and beatings. It also showed how Egan allowed three priests accused of sex abuse to continue working for years, in one case reinstating the Rev. Charles Carr in 1999 despite multiple claims that he fondled young boys.

Lori defrocked Carr last month after yet another complaint was made against him.

Egan also testified, in a 1999 deposition, that since his arrival in Bridgeport more than a decade earlier, neither he nor anyone else in that diocese had referred a single complaint of sex abuse by priests to police.

That appears to contrast with his statement Tuesday, in which he said he believes allegations of abuse should be reported to the authorities and that anyone who brings such a claim to the New York archdiocese will be encouraged to report it. He added that the archdiocese will make such a report when it finds "reasonable cause" to suspect that abuse has occurred.

Unlike in New York, clergy in Connecticut are mandated reporters, meaning they are among a handful of professionals required by law to refer allegations of abuse to either the state Department of Children and Families or the police within 24 hours. State statutes do not restrict the requirement to a certain time period after the alleged abuse.

But Egan's lawyer said during the deposition that he believed there is no legal obligation to report

alleged abuses from the past, if the child victim had turned 18 by the time the allegation was made. Jason Tremont, whose law firm, Tremont & Sheldon, represented 26 people who settled lawsuits against the Bridgeport diocese one year ago, disagreed.

Tuesday, Tremont said he believes such cases must be reported even when the alleged victims have turned 18. Doing so, he said, could help prevent future abuses by the same suspect and could allow police to find other victims.

Tremont said Egan's statement Tuesday is woefully lacking and doesn't acknowledge the mistakes that were made during the cardinal's tenure.

"Obviously, I totally disagree with this," he said. "I don't think this statement is sufficient. I don't believe they handled it appropriately. And I think he owes a greater explanation of his actions."

Tremont said the current Bridgeport bishop's statements at a press conference Tuesday back up his belief.

"When Bishop Lori says he's learned from the past and he's changed the way things are done, I think that proves the point," Tremont said.

Jon Fleetwood, a victim who claimed in a lawsuit that he was repeatedly abused as a child by a priest Egan protected, said he found the cardinal's words to be hollow. His lawsuit was one of more than two dozen settled last year when the diocese paid out roughly \$12 million.

"Back in the 1990s, he didn't want to believe anybody," said Fleetwood, now 30. "I'm not going to believe anything he says."

As if to symbolize that the flood tide of sex abuse by priests cannot be contained, New York was embroiled in still another case as details emerged that a priest accused in a lawsuit of sexual abuse was still performing ministerial duties at a Manhattan church.

The 1997 lawsuit alleges that the Rev. Henry Mills sexually abused a 17-year-old boy while working at a Bronx church. Even though the archdiocese officially lists Mills as on a "leave of absence," the priest is now assigned to St. Elizabeth Church in Washington Heights. Monsignor Gerald Walsh, the church's pastor, said Mills celebrates Mass, but does not teach at the parish school.

Brooklyn Bishop Thomas Daily was also under mounting pressure this week and is considering changes in his diocese's reporting policy, but had not made a decision as of Tuesday, spokesman Frank DeRosa said. Daily, who once served in Boston, was among the church leaders accused of keeping silent about abuse allegations against defrocked priest John J. Geoghan. The Boston archdiocese agreed last week to pay up to \$30 million to 86 people who accused Geoghan of child molestation.

"These lawsuits are occurring because there is no alternative," said John E. Fitzgerald, a senior partner in the law firm that filed suit against the New York priest. "The bishops have been ill-advised by defense attorneys and insurance people. They have developed a policy of channeling things into litigation so there can be secrecy agreements."

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau was also highly critical of the archdiocese's handling of the crisis and said Tuesday that church leaders have an obligation to report cases to civil authorities regardless of their own determination of innocence or guilt.

"Responsible officials in all religious institutions who have information about child abuse should make certain that information is brought to the attention of law enforcement," Morgenthau said. "I would expect the Archdiocese of New York to make available to my office all allegations of child abuse, including any past allegations."

Former Mayor Ed Koch was among a host of prominent former politicians and present officeholders who criticized the church for promoting a policy under which ecclesiastical authorities, not prosecutors,

should decide which cases are brought to light.

"All of these records should be provided to the district attorney, and then let the D.A. decide whether this should be made public," Koch said.

Joseph Zwilling, the spokesman for the archdiocese, said Tuesday evening that he did not know when Egan's letter to New York Catholics would be released. Zwilling said the "salient and essential facts" of the cardinal's complaint about The Courant's story will be "touched upon" then.

Brian Toolan, the editor of the Courant, said in a statement Tuesday: "We have great confidence in the accuracy of our report, since Cardinal Egan's role in the handling of the Bridgeport cases was described through his own sworn testimony in two depositions and diocesan memoranda."

"We've asked the Archdiocese of New York to detail any inaccuracies in our report, but so far they have not responded to our request," Toolan said. "We will continue to seek an interview with his Eminence."

Meanwhile, as new questions are raised about Egan's handling of perhaps the worst crisis in American Catholicism's history, prominent theologians and church historians are openly wondering whether the church's position on celibacy for priests, and the way church leaders are chosen, can last.

"Keep in mind that all of the bishops in the news right now were created by John Paul II," said Notre Dame theologian the Rev. Richard McBrien, whose book, "Catholicism," is now regarded as a standard college text in courses on the church. "These are men who are more loyal to the Vatican and its policies than to the concerns of vulnerable children."

McBrien feels that the public has seen "only the tip of the iceberg" on the sex abuse scandals so far, and that the resulting wave of revulsion and reconsideration among Catholics may well doom the practice of celibacy.

Experts in handling clergy sexual abuse also seem to agree that the new light thrown on the hierarchy's handling of cases will profoundly change the church's policies.

"These cases clearly reveal that the whole emphasis so far has merely been to protect the church," said Willard Sapp, a Kentucky pastoral counselor with national experience in handling sex abuse cases at churches of many denominations. "But silence never works. Silence has been used as an excuse to just move the priest around, give him a change of scenery, and then he just abuses new victims. The public is beginning to see that silence isn't a cure. It's a curse."

Courant Staff Writers Elizabeth Hamilton, Janice d'Arcy and Eric Rich contributed to this story. An Associated Press report is included.

### **Egan Calls Child Sex Abuse 'Abomination' Besieged archbishop urges alerting police**

By Robert Ingrassia with Bill Farrell and Joe Mahoney  
(NY) Daily News  
March 20, 2002

Edward Cardinal Egan broke his silence yesterday about child sexual abuse within the Catholic Church, calling molestation by priests "an abomination" and promising to encourage victims to take their cases to police.

"Sexual abuse of children is not only immoral, it is also illegal," the New York archbishop wrote in a six-paragraph statement. "I believe that allegations of abuse should be reported to the proper civil authorities."

Egan also said that a more detailed letter was being prepared for parishioners to explain how the Archdiocese of New York will respond to "the tragedy and immorality of sexual abuse."

"Sexual abuse of children is an abomination," he said. "It leaves scars on its victims that long endure. My heart goes out to any and all victims and their families."

But the cardinal stopped short of meeting requests from Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau and other prosecutors that the church turn over recent abuse allegations against current or newly retired priests.

Egan stood by an archdiocesan policy that gives church leaders the power to decide which allegations to report to law-enforcement authorities.

"When there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred and if the victims do not oppose the reporting, the archdiocese will make the appropriate reports to civil authorities," Egan stated.

That stance puts the New York Archdiocese at odds with the Boston Diocese and others around the nation that have promised to turn over to authorities all allegations of molestation.

Egan also lashed out at The Hartford Courant, which used sealed court records last weekend to accuse the cardinal of failing to aggressively investigate abuse allegations during his tenure as bishop in Bridgeport, Conn.

"Since that story omitted certain key facts and contained inaccuracies, it was necessary to review the cases in detail before responding," Egan said. "Having completed the review, I am confident that these cases were handled appropriately."

Letter to church flock

Egan said he would delve deeper into the sexual abuse issue in his upcoming letter to the 2.4 million diocese parishioners.

The letter also will provide more details about his handling of the Bridgeport cases, he said.

The Courant reported that Egan, who served as Bridgeport bishop from 1988 until becoming New York's archbishop in 2000, was dismissive toward victims reporting abuse, failed to report substantial cases to police and allowed several priests accused of molesting children to keep working.

In the past week, as church leaders across the country have publicly confronted the burgeoning pedophilia scandal, Egan has found himself under increasing pressure to speak out.

State Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno (R-Rensselaer), who was among those calling for Egan to take a stand, said the cardinal is a "real leader" for issuing a strong statement.

"When we spoke to him, he had indicated he had intended to address this issue, as difficult and troublesome as it is," said Bruno, who is Catholic. "He recognizes he has a role to play in creating the confidence levels that are necessary for his congregation and the general public."

Morgy tight-lipped

Morgenthau, who urged the church on Monday to tell his office about abuse allegations within the past several years, declined to comment about Egan's statement.

Bronx District Attorney Robert Johnson, who has demanded that the archdiocese report abuse cases, also declined to comment.

Staten Island District Attorney William Murphy praised Egan for encouraging people abused by priests to inform police.

"I applaud it," he said. "If people start reporting these instances to the authorities, we'll get a better assessment of the extent of the problem."

In his statement, Egan did not mention a proposal, backed by some state lawmakers and prosecutors, for a New York law requiring clergy members to report abuse allegations to law-enforcement authorities.

Egan's replacement in Bridgeport, Bishop William Lori, declined yesterday to speak about Egan's handling of previous cases.

"I'm only here to answer for the way I've responded to this in the past year and how I'm going to respond to this in the year going forward," said Lori, who marked his first year on the job yesterday.

But he praised Egan's work in Bridgeport, saying he "left behind a magnificent diocese."

"He started so many excellent initiatives here," Lori said. "I hope none of that will be lost in this discussion."Graphic: Statement from Edward Cardinal Egan:

Sexual abuse of children is an abomination. It leaves scars on its victims that long endure. My heart goes out to any and all victims and their families.

A letter is being prepared for the faithful of the Archdiocese of New York on the tragedy and immorality of sexual abuse. There will be in this letter a detailed outline of how the Archdiocese of New York responds to accusations of sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse of children is not only immoral, it is also illegal. Along with the district attorneys, I believe that allegations of abuse should be reported to the proper civil authorities, and I urge anyone who has an allegation to bring it immediately and directly to the civil authorities. If such allegations are made first to the archdiocese, we will encourage the person making the allegation to report that allegation to the proper civil authorities.

In the Archdiocese of New York, we will continue to enforce the policy of the archdiocese to thoroughly investigate all allegations and respond appropriately and pastorally to the person bringing the allegation and to the clergyman. In any such investigation, of course, we have to respect the rights of all persons involved, the rights of the accuser as well as the rights of the accused. As has been made clear, when there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse has occurred and if the victims do not oppose the reporting, the archdiocese will make the appropriate reports to civil authorities.

Recently, an area newspaper published a story concerning how three sexual abuse cases were handled in the Diocese of Bridgeport. There was immediate request for a reaction from me as the former bishop of Bridgeport. Since that story omitted

certain key facts and contained inaccuracies, it was necessary to review the cases in detail before responding. Having completed the review, I am confident that these cases were handled appropriately. The salient and essential facts of this matter will be touched upon in my upcoming letter.

Our children are to be protected always, and in this the archdiocese will be ever vigilant.

### **Cardinal Egan's Stone Wall**

Editorial  
New York Post  
March 20, 2002

Edward Cardinal Egan's response yesterday to charges of child molestation by priests under his control in the New York archdiocese and in Connecticut was no response at all.

He stonewalled.

These are tough times for the church. Dioceses in Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Florida, Pennsylvania and California in recent weeks have admitted harboring child-molesting priests.

On Monday, the FBI busted a child-porn Web site and charged nearly 90 people, including two priests.

While bishop of the Bridgeport diocese, Egan played big-league hardball with molestation victims who leveled accusations - finally settling lawsuits after eight long years of litigation.

Yesterday, The Post's Doug Montero also revealed that a priest accused of raping a 17-year-old boy five years ago is officially classified as being "on leave" by the New York archdiocese - but is actually working at a Manhattan church.

The cardinal, in a prepared statement, promised to address the issue "in a letter [now] being prepared for the faithful" - but refused, as a matter of policy, to call the cops in cases of child molestation.

Rather, "we will encourage the person making the allegation to report that allegation to the proper civil authority."

Meanwhile, silence reigned in the Brooklyn diocese, where Bishop Thomas Daily has apparently dismissed a seemingly credible charge by another priest implicating the Rev. Joseph Byrns in child molestation some 30 years ago.

The Rev. Timothy Lambert says he brought these charges to Daily more than two years ago, making it hard to characterize Lambert as a simple opportunist.

In any event, before Daily came to Brooklyn, he served silently in the Boston archdiocese - where more than 80 priests have recently been implicated in the sexual abuse of children.

Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau has requested that church leaders level with investigators voluntarily - knowing that there is little that can be done if they refuse.

Under the law, clerics enjoy privileges that can shield them from investigators' subpoenas.

There are compelling historical reasons for such immunity - but the protection of sexually predatory clerics isn't among them.

Already, state Senate Majority Leader Joe Bruno has asked clergymen with knowledge of crimes to step forward. Should they fail to do so, it's not hard to imagine legislation diluting clerical privilege gaining broad support.

And rightly so.

It is no longer possible to characterize as isolated events the molestation of children by Roman Catholic priests.

Responsibility rests with Egan, Daily and their ecclesiastical colleagues - and their response so far has been anything but encouraging.

### **Mystery Panel Sets Policy on Sex Cases**

By Douglas Montero  
New York Post  
March 20, 2002

The names of the board members are secret - top secret.

Yet this mysterious panel of powerful New Yorkers is responsible for shaping, and sometimes

dictating, the policies of the Archdiocese of New York when dealing with sexual-abuse allegations against a priest.

In fact, the "Advisory Board" has existed for more than 12 years. In all that time, it's had one mission: dealing with the exploding priest sex-abuse crisis that has engulfed the city.

"It's amazing," said Deborah Pearl Henkin, a lawyer who represents an alleged victim in a lawsuit. "Nothing is open to the public - even things that are innocuous."

Joseph Zwilling, the archdiocese spokesman, said the board existed for about a decade under the late John Cardinal O'Connor, and his successor, Edward Cardinal Egan, assembled a new panel once he took over in March 2000.

But he won't reveal its members.

"Cardinal Egan considers it to be an internal board and has not publicized the names of the members," said Zwilling.

One source close to the archdiocese says the board usually consists of retired judges, former politicians, businessmen and powerful lawyers who are devout Catholics with equally strong influence in the city. Church documents indicate it consists of pastoral and psychological experts as well.

Zwilling estimated the current board has six to eight members.

Asked about the board's influence on Egan's decisions, Zwilling said, "Cardinal Egan has always been committed to collaboration and consultation before a decision is made."

It was impossible to determine how much sway the board has on Egan.

The board meets as often as once a week and reviews mostly sexual-abuse investigative reports presented to them by a monsignor in charge of the archdiocese's Office of Priest Personnel.

Egan yesterday finally spoke out, announcing plans to release a letter on how the archdiocese responds to sex-abuse allegations.

Let's just hope he releases the names of his powerful secret board - along with the names of all the priests who've been accused of molesting kids and work in parishes.

### **My Case Is Different, Convicted Rev. Says**

By Brian Harmon  
(NY) Daily News  
March 20, 2002

A former Long Island priest convicted of sodomizing a teenage boy said yesterday he understands the public's outrage over the growing number of sex abuse cases involving priests.

But Michael Hands also insisted that it is unfair for the public to compare his case with the others.

[Photo Caption - Ex-priest Michael Hands, who was convicted of sexually abusing a teenage boy, waits in Riverhead, L.I., court. Photo by Dennis Clark.]

"There's a lot of public outrage - and rightfully so - but what is disappointing is that there seems to be a lumping together of all allegations against priests involving sexual misconduct," Hands said outside Suffolk County court yesterday, where he appeared earlier on a related sexual abuse charge.

"Each case is distinctly different. . . . There's a big difference in my case," Hands told the Daily News, but he declined to be more specific.

But a sex crimes cop who investigated Hands saw no difference at all.

Nassau County Police Sgt. Richard Zito said Hands developed a relationship with his victim's family and gained their trust so he could be with the boy.

"That kind of behavior is typical of a pedophile," he said. "They groom the family in order to get access to the boy."

Two weeks ago, Hands, 35, pleaded guilty in Nassau County to five counts of sodomy and two counts of endangering the welfare of a child.

Sex abuse at age 13

Police said the victim - now 15 - was 13 when the priest began having sex with him in August 1999.

Hands now faces additional sex abuse charges in Suffolk because he allegedly had sex with the same boy in that county.

He is expected to be sentenced to six months behind bars on the Nassau charges April 23. He has resigned from the ministry.

A hearing in the Suffolk case, to determine whether statements Hands made to police can be used in court, was postponed until Monday in Judge Stephen Braslow's courtroom.

James Cudden, the assistant district attorney in the case, did not comment. Hands' attorney, Peter Rubin, also did not comment.

Cops said Hands' sex romps with the boy started during the priest's stint as an associate pastor at St. Philip Neri Church in Northport, Suffolk County. Court documents and police reports indicate Hands and the boy had sex at the boy's home, in the church rectory and most recently at St. Raphael Church's rectory in East Meadow, Nassau County.

Hands, who said he was suspended by the Diocese of Rockville Centre when the charges surfaced, said he misses being a priest.

"Yes, there are regrets about the way things have happened," he said. "Certainly, I would have much more to say at an appropriate time, when my lawyer's advice is not to not talk to the media."