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2nd Man Reveals Abuse Charge

The Rev. Lawrence Pizzutti, Now Deceased, Linked to Another Attack Claim

By Andrew Tilghman
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When a 59-year-old Waterford man contacted Roman Catholic Church leaders last year to complain about being sexually abused by a priest more than 40 years ago, church officials sat down with him to hear his story.

They said they were sorry.

They offered him counseling.

In April, they gave him a check for \$7,000.

What they left out was that his was not the first complaint about the Rev. Lawrence Pizzutti, who served for many years at St. Anthony's Church in Troy and is now deceased.

"After 50 years, they still lied to me," the Waterford man, who asked that his name not be printed, said Thursday. The man, who said he was molested at age 15, was the second man to come forward this week to speak publicly about alleged sexual abuse by Pizzutti, a Franciscan friar who died in May 1977.

On Wednesday, Edmund Zampier, a 61-year-old editor at The Daily Gazette newspaper of Schenectady, said he told the Diocese of Albany nearly two years ago that he was molested repeatedly as a teenager by Pizzutti and another priest, who is also deceased.

The Times Union did not name either priest in an article on Thursday about Zampier because they are deceased and could not respond. The newspaper is now identifying Pizzutti because a second man has made a similar allegation and had received payment from the church.

The story of the two alleged victims, who never met until Thursday, is the latest example of the church's reluctance to let victims know whether their abusers have drawn complaints from others.

Pizzutti's superiors at his New York City-based Franciscan order greeted the Waterford man's allegations skeptically, despite having received similar complaints from Zampier in October 2001.

"Because the events you shared with us took place nearly 50 years ago, it has been difficult to find another friar who might be able to shed light on Father Pizzutti's activities in the 1950s," the Rev. Robert Campagna wrote to the man in a April 3 letter.

Both Zampier and the Waterford man said they talked to Campagna, head of the Provincial Order of the Immaculate Conception, a group of about 200 Franciscans working throughout the Northeast.

Campagna said there was no reason for him to tell the Waterford man about another complaint.

"He never asked me that question," Campagna said in an interview on Thursday. "I don't think it would be right to discuss anyone's confidential case with anyone else."

The church received no complaints about Pizzutti before his death, Campagna said.

"We checked his file. It was clean as a whistle," Campagna said. "It's kind of hard when all of the sudden, out of the woodwork, here we come."

"There is no way of telling this is true or this is not true," Campagna said, noting he was ordained the same year Pizzutti died and he only met the priest in passing a few times.

Campagna said the two men's stories had little in common because the alleged abuse of Zampier occurred repeatedly for a year and the alleged abuse of the Waterford man involved a single incident.

"They are not related at all. Even the nature of the accusations is completely different," Campagna said. "It's like a puddle and the Pacific Ocean."

The Waterford man said Pizzutti molested him after he went to the priest for confession and admitted to having sex with his girlfriend.

The Diocese of Albany said on Wednesday it was still reviewing Zampier's allegations.

On Thursday, the diocese acknowledged also receiving a complaint from the Waterford man.

"In accord with our policy, we offered the person counseling and made a referral to the superiors of Father Pizzutti's religious community to process the complaint according to their policies and procedures," the diocese said in a written statement.

"The Albany Diocese has made no financial payments involving this complaint. Any further information would require communication with the Franciscan community," the statement said.

Bishop Howard Hubbard on Dec. 18 sent the man a letter, in which he wrote, "I'm sorry to learn of this incident you related in your letter. Please be assured of my desire to address this."

Hubbard's letter also referred the Waterford man to Theresa Rodrigues, the diocese's victim/survivors assistance coordinator.

Attorney John Aretakis, who represents Zampier, said he has clients with allegations involving about eight priests who worked in the Albany Diocese.

"There are untruths that the diocese has been giving these victims and now, when these matters become public, the victims are getting together and talking to each other and they are starting to connect the dots," Aretakis said.

Zampier said he was thrilled to meet the Waterford man Thursday.

"Wow. I have confirmation," Zampier said.