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## **Priests Accused of Abusing Kids Years Ago at Salesian Center**

By Chris McKenna  
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Goshen, NY - Four men say two priests sexually abused them decades ago at the former Salesian Junior Seminary in Goshen, according to a lawsuit.

The defendants include the two alleged abusers, who were members of a Roman Catholic order called the Salesians of Saint Don Bosco. One has since left the order.

The lawsuit, filed last month in state Supreme Court in Westchester County, charges that the abuse occurred between 1968-73.

Also named are two current Salesian officials, a Salesian priest who

recruited boys for the junior seminary in the 1960s and 1970s, and the order itself, which has provincial offices in New Rochelle.

The plaintiffs, who were teen-age students at the time, charge that two priests, the Rev. George Puello and the Rev. Richard Matikonas, sought them out in their dormitory beds at night and performed sexual acts on them against their will.

"I wanted to be a priest, and I put my faith and trust in these men to teach me how to be a priest," one of the plaintiffs, Michael Egan, said by phone yesterday.

Egan, now 47 years old and living in the Town of Wallkill, entered the junior seminary at age 14 and stayed for two years. He said he kept quiet about the abuse for years, not even discussing it with former seminary classmates with whom he stayed in touch.

Then, in April, he read a newspaper article about alleged abuse at a

Salesian school in the state of Florida. "It really pushed me over the

edge," he said. He and his old friends called each other immediately and learned they had each experienced similar abuse.

"The full extent of it didn't manifest itself until we read each others'

depositions," Egan said.

Seth Taube, a lawyer for the Salesian order and two provincial leaders, expressed sympathy for the men yesterday but said the statute of limitations on their allegations expired long ago.

"We believe these claims are time-barred and therefore look to the courts to dismiss this suit," said Taube, whose office is in Newark.

Marcia Goffin, a New York City lawyer representing the plaintiffs, replied: "Our position is that our clients were afraid to come forward and were damaged in so many ways."

The plaintiffs are seeking an unspecified amount in damages. Goffin said her clients also were seeking new safeguards "to ensure that this doesn't happen again."

Puello left the Salesian order about 30 years ago, and Matikonas is still a Salesian priest but doesn't work with unsupervised access to children, Taube said. He wouldn't elaborate.

The Salesian junior seminary - a four-year high school for aspiring

priests - operated on a 175-acre campus in Goshen between 1961 and 1985. It was an elementary boarding school before then and a youth center afterward. The campus closed in 1991 when the order sold the property.

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