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Man Accuses 2 Priests, Now Dead, of Abuse

Troy Edmund Zampier Says Relations Occurred 40 Years Ago in Family's Troy Parish

By Andrew Tilghman
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A 61-year-old Troy man on Wednesday publicly accused two priests, who are now deceased, of sexually abusing him about 40 years ago.

Edmund Zampier, an editor at The Daily Gazette newspaper of Schenectady, said he told the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany more than two years ago that he was repeatedly sexually abused between ages 15 and 22 by two priests in his family parish, Our Lady of Victory in Troy.

"The priests may be dead, but I am still alive and I am seeking justice," Zampier told reporters at his home in Troy. He is seeking a financial settlement and a public apology, he said.

The clergymen are the third and fourth from the small Troy parish to face allegations of sexually abusing children during the past 40 years. The Albany Diocese has acknowledged credible allegations of sexual abuse by two others, the Rev. Edward Leroux, who was removed from ministry last year, and the Rev. John Connolly, who was removed in April.

On Wednesday, the diocese issued a statement saying that Zampier's allegations are under review, but noted, "Obviously when a priest is deceased and the allegations are more than 40 years old, it is most difficult to determine the truth or falsity of the allegation."

Zampier is the first person to air allegations about a priest who has since died. The Albany Diocese has not confirmed any allegations against deceased priests during the 18-month-old clergy sex abuse scandal.

"All allegations of the sexual abuse of a minor by priests are brought before the diocesan sexual misconduct panel review board, whether the priests is alive or deceased," the statement said.

"Because it is impossible for the priests who are the subject of the allegations to respond, the Times Union is withholding their names," Editor Rex Smith said. "Every other priest already identified by the newspaper had been either named in a lawsuit or confirmed by church authorities as the subject of credible allegations," Smith noted.

Zampier said he was from a troubled home in Troy when the priests repeatedly molested him. One was his family's parish priest and the other oversaw the church-based scholarship that paid for his college tuition, he said.

Zampier said the diocese offered him a \$4,000 settlement payment, but he refused it as insufficient.

Zampier's attorney, John Aretakis, said the priests took Zampier on numerous trips out of state and to Canada. He is planning on filing a lawsuit against the Albany Diocese in another state, such as Massachusetts, where the laws are friendlier to victims, Aretakis said.

Zampier said Bishop Howard Hubbard came to his small two-story home in Troy for a "reconciliation service" last summer. Hubbard gave a sermon, but did not offer a satisfactory apology, Zampier said.

Former Oklahoma Gov. Frank Keating, who headed the national lay review board monitoring implementation of the U.S. Catholic bishops' sex abuse policy, said last year that he supported the release of names of dead priests believed to have sexually abused a child.

CORRECTION-DATE: July 4, 2003

CORRECTION:

A story in Thursday's Capital Region section incorrectly reported the parish of a priest, now deceased, who was publicly accused of sexual abuse. The Rev. Lawrence Pizzutti, whose name was not published in the story, was pastor at St. Anthony's Church in Troy. Another deceased priest in the story was at Our Lady of Victory in Troy.

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