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## **Father Pat' Haunts Them Still - 3 Claim Priest Molested Them**

By Allen Salkin  
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THE Catholic Church tried to pay Daniel Dugo Jr. \$15,000 so you would never read this story.

But Dugo was worried that if he took the money, more children would be left vulnerable to a serial child molester.

Dugo, 29, says the depression and intimacy problems he has battled for years can be traced back to sexual abuse he suffered as a boy at St. Cecilia's School in Brooklyn's Greenpoint section.

He and two other former students have come forward to speak about what they charge was done to them around the early 1980s by the school's then-administrator and supervisor of altar boys, the Rev. Patrick Sexton.

One of the former students said that when he was 12, Sexton lured him to his bedroom in the church rectory. He said the naked priest had him strip and adopt poses while snapping photos.

Dugo has gone to the police and to the district attorney, charging that when he was 8, Sexton fondled him while nibbling his ear.

Sexton, 49, denies all of the charges.

No longer a practicing priest, he lives across the street from a playground and a public school in Bayside, Queens.

A neighbor said he gives music lessons after school to boys.

The police and the district attorney told Dugo that even if the nearly 20-year-old charges are true, there is nothing they can do. The statute of limitations is up.

So Dugo called a newspaper.

In recent years, many stories of sexual abuse by Catholic priests have emerged.

But it is rare that three victims, none of whom is seeking financial reward, would step out so publicly to tell their stories. It also is rare that the horrors they allege strike so close to home: at a grand granite and marble church that has graced North Henry and Herbert streets since it was built in 1891.

Rarer still is someone coming forward with a copy of a document showing the church offering money in exchange for silence about a case of alleged child sexual abuse by a priest.

ABOVE the front doors of St. Cecilia's are the Latin words: "Fiat cor meum immaculatum."

Translation: "Let my heart be pure."

Sal Carlino, 28, Nicholas Urzia, 30, and Dugo say they were forever robbed of their chances of that high ideal by a priest everyone knew simply as "Father Pat."

"Everybody used to call him 'the kiddies' pal,'" Carlino said.

Sexton was known for his love of The Beatles and for playing songs on his guitar, like the tune he made up called "Gorilla," Carlino said.

One day after school, Carlino, then about 12, was waiting outside to walk his sister home after her Brownies meeting. He said Sexton approached him and asked, "Why don't you come upstairs?"

"You can wait in my room. We can hang out upstairs, play guitar and listen to music."

Once up in Sexton's room, Carlino said, the priest started a tickling game with him.

"It was touching and tickling, here and there, touching and tickling, 'Now tickle me' -- back and forth, then it went to 'other' areas," Carlino said during an interview in Deer Park, L.I., where he is an air-conditioning installer.

That was the first of at least three incidents that involved the priest fondling him and asking him to reciprocate, said Carlino, who is now married.

"I remember us laying naked in his bed and then he made me get up and stand at the front of the bed and took pictures of me, made me do poses -- turning to the side and this and that," Carlino said.

Another time, Carlino said, a naked Sexton led him down a hall in the rectory to a common shower where there were three other naked boys already under the water, splashing around.

"I remember him telling me to get in there with them and then I remember him taking pictures," Carlino said.

After each time, Carlino said, Father Pat told him, "This is a secret between you and me, OK? Don't tell anyone."

In the St. Cecilia's School 1986 yearbook, Sexton is thanked by the staff for "taking countless photographs and always being available."

Carlino said he no longer attends church services.

About five years ago, Carlino talked to a lawyer about his allegations against Sexton, but the lawyer told him it was too late.

For all felonies except murder, the statute of limitations is five years after first reporting the alleged crime to police, or five years after the victim turns 18, whichever comes first.

NICHOLAS URZIA lived across the street from St. Cecilia's when he was growing up, and became an altar boy in 1980.

One day in 1980 or 1981, Urzia said, he was coming home from Little League practice, passing by the church, when Father Pat beckoned him over and asked him up to his room in the rectory.

"He sat on the bed and I sat next to him, never thinking what would come from it," Urzia, now a truck driver, said of the incident, which he claims happened when he was about 11.

"I had on Little League baseball pants. He tried to go under the elastic. I pushed him right away."

Urzia said he got up and left the room and never walked home on the St. Cecilia's side of the street again.

"I had a fear if I was on that side of the street, he would get me," said Urzia, who also no longer attends church services.

"When you're that young, you don't know if there are others," he said, standing in a truck yard in Greenpoint and explaining why he never told anyone his story until Dugo, searching for other alleged victims, called last year.

"You think you're the only one. You're afraid to tell anyone. You don't know if anyone will believe you," Urzia said.

Urzia has been married for a nine months and his wife is expecting a baby.

DUGO, now a carpenter, is not married and said he has trouble maintaining relationships. When he was an 8-year-old student at St. Cecilia's, his parents were separated and he looked up to Father Pat.

"He was like my father, who wasn't around," Dugo said.

One day, while sitting on the couch up in Sexton's room, the boy's trust was shattered, Dugo said.

"He put his hand down my shorts, squeezed my testicles and he nibbled on my ear," Dugo said in a burst of words during an interview in the office of his Manhattan lawyer Robert Sharron.

"I tried to pull away from him, and he grabbed me by the arm and was holding me, and finally I broke free and got out of there."

SEXTON, in a short phone interview, said he denies all the charges and doesn't understand why the three former students remember things the way they do. He denied acting in a sexually inappropriate way.

"What happened 20 years ago is all in memory, and memory can do what it wants," Sexton said. "Their memory is not accurate.

"If I'm affectionate, then they are remembering affection as not affection."

Sexton said he doesn't know why Dugo feels it is important to level these charges. "I think Danny has an agenda," Sexton said. "I think he's obsessed. We're talking 20 years ago."

DUGO said he did not remember the alleged abuse until he was watching a television show in 1998 and a female character said she'd been abused by her father.

Dugo became sick to his stomach, and the memories of his own abuse came flooding back, he said.

After speaking with his brother and sister -- who remembered him as an 8-year-old suddenly not wanting to spend time after school at St. Cecilia's -- Dugo decided to go to the Brooklyn Diocese and tell them what he believed about Father Pat.

He told them he wanted an investigation and financial compensation for all the psychologist's bills he'd been paying. At first, he suggested \$7,200 would be fair, and then raised the amount to \$15,000.

For their money, the church asked for something in return. Lawyers for the diocese sent a proposed accord for him to sign. He would agree to relinquish all future claims against the Catholic Church and to keep his mouth shut about the alleged incidents.

"A lump-sum payment of \$15,000 shall be paid to Daniel Dugo upon execution of this agreement ..." the proposed settlement reads.

Another section says, "The parties agree that neither they nor their attorneys nor representatives shall reveal to anyone, other than as may be mutually agreed in writing, any of the terms of this settlement agreement."

Frank DeRosa, a spokesman for the Brooklyn Diocese, said the offer was not an admittance of Sexton's guilt, just an offer to help Dugo, a former parishioner.

"We are a church, and out of pastoral concern for the individual, the [Catholic] Church decided to help him," he said.

"The statute of limitations has run out on this case. There's no legal requirement for the [Catholic] Church to help out."

DeRosa refused to say if the Brooklyn Diocese had issued any other settlement agreements in the past five years or paid out any other money.

He said that no one other than Dugo has approached the diocese with suspicions about Sexton.

NATIONALLY, the Catholic Church has paid out untold millions of dollars -- some estimates say \$1 billion -- for psychological counseling and in private settlements with alleged victims of sexual abuse. The Diocese of Camden, N.J., alone has reportedly paid out at least \$3.2 million.

DeRosa said the Brooklyn Diocese called Sexton after Dugo leveled his accusations, but did not seek out former St. Cecilia's students or faculty to ask about the former priest.

"We are dealing with Sexton's vehemently denying this took place," DeRosa said.

Sexton was ordained as a priest in 1977 and served at St. Cecilia's until 1986, when he was transferred to St. Patrick's in Long Island City, Queens, DeRosa said.

Sexton stayed there until 1990, when he took a leave from active ministry.

Sexton said he left the Catholic Church of his own volition, but did not want to say why.

"I left the church for my own reasons," he said.

Asked what he was doing for a living now, the former priest said, "I'm involved in music."

STARING at the settlement agreement which had been faxed to him, Dugo decided his silence wasn't worth any amount of money.

He went to the police and the district attorney and then to Sharron. All told him it was too late to pursue a criminal or a civil case, unless a victim who is under 23 years old can be found.

Dugo did what the Catholic Church did not, seeking out former students who would corroborate what he said about Sexton and then giving their names to police.

A police source familiar with the case said the Brooklyn district attorney is continuing to investigate Sexton.

"There is a possibility that there is criminal activity going on, and that's not something that would be left on the wayside," the source said.

Helen Safetes, a neighbor who lives across from Sexton on the second floor of his Bayside apartment building, said she saw the former priest recently leading two boys into his apartment.

Sexton, who once gave Safetes' 3-year-old son a birthday present, told her they were music students

and were his "godsons."

"He gave my little boy once a little plastic bunny bank with jelly beans in it," Safetes, 36, said.

"He wrote a note that said, 'To Dimitri from Patrick.'"

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