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New Allegations of Sexual Abuse Target Rev. White

By Dave Condren
Buffalo News
March 31, 1994

While mourners gathered around a man's coffin, a parish priest visited the man's two teen-age sons in their West Seneca home.

But the priest was not there to console the grieving youngsters.

Instead of offering words of comfort, the priest tried to whip them into a frenzy -- to make them angry with each other by telling them hateful things that their father had supposedly said about each of them, according to one of the brothers. The priest then ordered the boys to disrobe and spank each other, the brother said.

The incident occurred more than seven years ago, and the priest was the Rev. William F. White, who currently is under suspension because of allegations of sexual abuse in a different case.

The Catholic Diocese quickly transferred Father White after family members complained about the incident in West Seneca. But no other disciplinary action was taken, and his faculties to function as a priest were not suspended.

Instead, Father White "was evaluated by independent professionals and, at the conclusion of his evaluation, was transferred based upon the recommendation of those professionals," Monsignor Robert J. Cunningham said Wednesday.

"We were told . . . that there was absolutely no physical contact whatsoever," stressed Monsignor Cunningham, chancellor for the diocese.

Relatives of the two boys, however, said that they believed the priest was interrupted before he could carry out his full intentions. Family members returned to the boys' house, looking for the teens, and found them sitting in their underwear in separate bedrooms, said the boys' mother and other relatives.

"Father White was angry. He was flushed and in a frenzy when he saw us. He just took off," a female cousin of the boys' mother reported. "Obviously, he had no intention of bringing them to the funeral home. It was about 8:10 p.m., and the wake was over at 9."

The West Seneca incident is one of three new complaints about sexual abuse and deviant behavior by Father White that recently have come to light since the diocese revealed earlier this month that he was suspended more than a year ago because of other sexual-abuse accusations.

Monsignor Cunningham was asked this week if there are more sex-abuse complaints about Father White.

He would not say.

"For a number of reasons, including fairness to the priest and the wishes of the complainant for anonymity, it is not our policy to respond to inquiries like this," he said.

What is the diocesan policy when accusations of abuse are made?

"The policy of the diocese is to investigate any complaints in accordance with the internal guidelines of the diocese and to take appropriate action when warranted, relying on evaluations made by professionals in the specific areas to which the complaint pertains," Monsignor Cunningham said.

Father White currently is receiving counseling and treatment at an out-of-state facility and has not commented publicly on the allegations.

At the time of the West Seneca incident in February 1987, Father White was serving as assistant pastor of Queen of Heaven Parish. He had been scheduled to offer the funeral Mass for the boys' father the next morning.

According to the boys' mother, Father White sent word he wanted to talk to the boys and offered to drive them to the funeral home after their talk.

But he did not arrive at the family's home until all the adults had left for the wake, and he was wearing a jogging suit rather than the black suit and Roman collar.

"He said he wanted us to spank

each other. If we wouldn't do it, he was going to spank us," one of the boys told The Buffalo News.

Before that occurred, however, four adults arrived to see what was delaying the boys.

Monsignor James F. Campbell, pastor of Queen of Heaven, said this week he "contacted the bishop's office immediately" after the incident was reported to him and felt that was the extent of his responsibility.

Monsignor Campbell also questioned the brothers individually and appeared to believe their story, their mother said. Two or three weeks later, he told the woman and one of the boys that Father White "was being transferred to St. Louis Parish, where he would not be around kids," the mother said.

In the other most recent case to come to light, two grown men now claim they were abused by Father White at the former Working Boys' Home, later known as Buffalo Boys' Town, on Vermont Street.

The priest regularly ordered them to report to his room, where they were required to remove their clothes and submit to genital inspections, supposedly for venereal disease, they claim.

"He would sit in a chair and fondle me all over," one of the men said. "Once he wanted oral sex, but I said 'no.' "

The other man alleges that the fondling eventually led to sodomy.

The two men said they never reported the abuse to anyone in authority at the home or to the diocese because they feared they would lose privileges at the home. They also admitted they were embarrassed to talk about it with anyone until years later.

Monsignor Cunningham confirmed that neither of the men contacted the diocese with a complaint.

One of the men from the Working Boys' Home said he was molested by Father White "at least 10 times" in 1970 and 1971. The young man, who was 16 and 17 years of age during that period, said he had been sent there for running away from a foster home.

The other man, who lived at the Working Boys' Home from 1970 to 1973, claims that both he and his brother were abused by Father White. They were sent to the home, as an alternative to going to jail, for stealing a car.

Father White also abused him at the home of the priest's parent in South Buffalo and at a family summer home in West Valley, the man said. The abuse started, the man said, the day Father White told him that his father had died.

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