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## Sex Offender Says Molestation by Priest Spurred His Own Deviance

By Dave Condren  
Buffalo News  
May 29, 1994

James' life took a drastic turn for the worse in the 1980s.

One day he was in a position of responsibility and influence in local government. Not long after that, he was in jail with a felony conviction for sodomizing two teen-age boys.

He is convinced that an encounter shortly before Christmas 1969 with the Rev. William F. White III, is partially to blame for what happened to him later.

James, who is currently trying to rebuild his life, is one of 11 men whose names have surfaced as alleged sexual victims of Father White.

Like many of them, he acknowledges that he never contacted diocesan officials about the abuse he claims was inflicted by Father White. It was 10 years after Father White sexually abused him, he said, before he was able to tell his parents. Then he was not able to give them any details.

"I told them something happened involving a priest," he said.

During an interview last week, James, a Buffalo resident, said he is willing to talk about his ordeal with Father White because he disagrees with the way the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo deals with alleged abuse cases.

"The church is addressing the issue from the point of view that 'we're getting counseling for the priests'," James contended.

"Why isn't the diocese paying more attention to the victims? They are trying to save themselves instead of tending to the souls of the people who are hurting," he said.

A former altar boy, James claims he was an 11-year-old pupil at St. John the Evangelist School on Seneca Street in South Buffalo at the time of the incident with Father White. He said he was one of several boys who were sent to the church on "a punishment detail" to help with Christmas decorating. The purpose of the punishment was never made clear, James said.

Father White, assistant pastor at St. John the Evangelist at the time, was in charge of the work detail, James said.

He claims that Father White took him to a room in the church basement, told him that additional punishment was necessary and gave him the option of being spanked with "five swats with my pants down or ten with them on."

"I was 11 years old. I said 'the five swats'," he said.

Instead of spanking him immediately, James alleged, Father White "fondled me first."

"Then he put me over his lap and hit me but he kept his hand there (each time). It wasn't like a spanking," he said.

"I didn't know then what was happening. I was thinking 'here is a man of God. He is three steps away from God. There are priests, bishops, the pope and God'," James said.

"I was afraid of Father White," James said, because he had seen the priest pick up another youngster in the church and raise him high in the air.

Father White, who had been ordained about a year at the time of the incident, stands about 6 feet 3 inches tall.

James said he assumes full responsibility for the more recent sex acts that landed him in jail. But he also believes that the incident with Father White put him on the path that led to a jail cell.

"I look back at that event and say that's where my problem began," James said. "I think if I had gone for counseling at a young age, I would have made a lot fewer mistakes in my life. I know I would not have committed the crimes I committed.

"The fact that I was abused by someone in that position validated the act," he added. "Not realizing (until going into counseling years later) the impact that it had on me prevented me from realizing the impact I was having on my victims," James believes.

James said that years later, he attempted "to reach out to the church" while he was in jail by writing a letter to a longtime priest friend.

"I said I had been abused by a priest at St. John's and I would like to talk to him about it," James said. "He never responded."

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