

BishopAccountability.org

SNAP: Sex Abuse Victims Seek Help Warning Others about Molesting Priest

Cleric Is Suspended Yet Now Allegedly Works as Chaplain in Philadelphia

He's Also Worked in New York, New Jersey & Texas

Church Officials Should Reach Out to Others He Hurt, Group Says

Yahoo! News

January 4, 2006

<http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/060104/cgw040.html?.v=35>

NEW YORK, Jan. 4 /PRNewswire/ -- Concerned about a suspended and allegedly abusive priest who recently resurfaced as a chaplain in Philadelphia, clergy molestation victims are writing to New York's top Catholic official urging him to warn neighbors and prospective employers about the cleric and reach out to any of his victims "who may still be suffering in shame, isolation and self-blame."

They're also hoping that outreach efforts may turn up more recent victims who could criminally prosecute the priest.

Leaders of a support group called SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, are worried about Father Anthony J. Eremito, a New York Archdiocese priest who apparently was recently hired by Odyssey Hospice in Philadelphia. Eremito was suspended from active ministry in 2002 because of credible allegations of molesting boys. (http://www.votfnj.org/page.cfm?Web_ID=24)

SNAP is contacting Cardinal Edward Egan of New York, asking that he "use parish bulletins, diocesan newspapers, church websites and pulpit announcements to inform and warn parishioners about Eremito." The group also wants Egan to "repeatedly, emphatically and publicly prod anyone who witnessed, suspected or experienced his crimes to call the police."

Most of Eremito's known abuse took place in the 1970s and 1980s.

"We know molesters rarely stop, so we suspect there are more recent victims, and believe he's still dangerous," said David Clohessy of St. Louis, SNAP's national director. "And we know that police and prosecutors have become increasingly resourceful about going after serial sex offenders, so we do have hope that someday he'll be locked up and kids will be safer."

Yesterday, one of Eremito's victims, Father John Bambrick, wrote church officials in Philadelphia and New York and Odyssey local headquarters in Blue Bell, PA and national headquarters in Dallas, TX and the Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham, warning them about Eremito.

"I am sure your corporation would not want to put vulnerable individuals at risk," Bambrick wrote in a letter to Odyssey CEO Robert Lefton. "I pray you will be attentive to this matter and be more vigilant in your hiring practices so that children are not unwittingly placed at risk during a particularly vulnerable time in their families lives."

As recently as 2002, Eremito, now in his mid 60s, worked at Covenant Medical Center, a children's hospital in Lubbock, Texas. For years, he worked in the Bronx (St. Raymond's and St. Margaret) and Manhattan (Church of the Holy Cross in Times Square). In the mid-1990s, he said mass at St. Agnes Church in Atlantic Highlands, N.J.

"If the church hierarchy really wanted to, they could do far more to alert vulnerable families and unsuspecting employers about this dangerous predator," said Barbara Dorris of St. Louis, SNAP

Outreach Director.

Several times in recent years, SNAP leaders have publicly called on national and local Catholic church officials to take stronger steps to alert neighbors and parents about potentially dangerous clerics and ex-clerics. Specifically, they have repeatedly asked for a national data base and web site, where the names of proven, admitted and credibly accused abusive priests would be permanently posted.

"Parents, police, prosecutors, and others need and deserve a 'one stop shop' where they can quickly learn who's dangerous," Clohessy said.

Just yesterday, New York's highest court heard oral arguments about whether child molestation cases against priests should be allowed to proceed because church leaders allegedly covered up horrific sex crimes by clergy.

"This is one more in a long, frightening string of examples of predators popping up around kids again and again," said Clohessy. "It proves what we've long believed -- that victims need to be able to use the time-tested American court system to warn others about dangerous men, because these guys rarely quit hurting children."

Bambrick was sexually abused as a 15-year-old altar boy in Matawan, N.J., where he met Eremito. The priest was working in the Bronx at the time.

Bambrick is now pastor of St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Manalapan NJ. He is also SNAP's legislative director for the state.

Copies of SNAP's letter, sent today by fax and e mail, and of Bambrick's letter, sent yesterday by US mail, are below.

(For more information: Fr. John Bambrick of Manalapan NY, SNAP Legislative Director 732 616 9402, David Clohessy of St. Louis, SNAP National Director 314 566 9790 cell, 314 645 5915)

Jan. 4, 2006

Dear Cardinal Egan:

We are worried about the safety of children in Philadelphia who are near Fr. Anthony Eremito -- a suspended serial sexual predator priest. We are also worried about the well-being of adults in several states (New York, New Jersey, and Texas) who were assaulted by him as children and may still be suffering in shame, silence, and self-blame.

For the sake of both groups -- kids still at risk and adults still in pain -- we ask that you take further steps to warn others about him, urge victims and witnesses to contact the police about him, and help prod him into moving to a more remote, secure facility.

First, some history:

As you know, Eremito is a New York priest who:

- has been accused of molesting youngsters
- has been suspended from active ministry
- can't present himself publicly as a priest
- has been seen violating his suspension, and
- has shown no remorse for his crimes.

Now the current situation;

In the last few days, from sources we can't disclose, we have learned that he now works at Odyssey Hospice in Philadelphia.

Your role in this:

Helping Eremito's wounded adult victims and safeguarding Eremito's potential child victims is your responsibility. He is still an archdiocesan priest, on your payroll, obligated to obey you. You are still his prelate and boss.

We understand that you cannot physically force Eremito to quit this job. But we also understand that "where there's a will, there's a way." We firmly believe that you can and should do more to pressure him to take a safer position, away from children, not as a chaplain.

And even if you can't control Eremito's behavior, you can control your own.

You control your archdiocesan newspaper. So we respectfully ask you to use that publication to warn unsuspecting parents about known and suspected abusive clerics, especially Eremito.

You control your diocesan website. So we respectfully ask you to use this vehicle to warn unsuspecting parents about Eremito and other known and suspected abusive clerics.

You control your archdiocesan parish bulletins. So we respectfully ask you to put notices in them, even just one Sunday, to warn unsuspecting parents about known and suspected abusive clerics.

You control your own schedule. So we respectfully ask you please go to the parishes near where Eremito worked. Again, please prod anyone who may have witnessed, suspected, or experienced Eremito's crimes to come forward and get help and to contact the police.

None of these requests are costly, complex, or controversial. These are simple, common sense steps that might help one victim heal or might help one child be protected.

We hope that you will act promptly to safeguard vulnerable children.

David Clohessy
National Director, SNAP
Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests
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January 3, 2006

Mr. Robert Lefton, President & CEO
Odyssey HealthCare
717 North Harwood Street, Suite 1500
Dallas, Texas 75201

Dear Mr. Lefton:

I received a call today informing me that your corporation has hired Mr. Anthony Joseph Eremito (aliases; Rev. Anthony Eremito, Fr. Anthony Eremito, Andy Eremito) as a Hospice Chaplain in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The above mentioned is a priest of the Archdiocese of New York currently on Administrative leave without faculties and not permitted to serve in ministry. He has been suspended since the spring of 2002 (his second suspension) due to allegations of sexual abuse of minors. A simple Google search would have revealed this to your corporation. I am one of those who filed a formal complaint.

For confirmation of this information you may contact the Archdiocese of New York's Priest Personnel Office, Rev. Msgr. Desmond O'Connor, Dir. 1011 First Avenue New York, New York 10022. Phone number 1-212-371-1000 or the Office of Victims Assistance at the same address and phone number.

Lynne Abraham, District Attorney for the Philadelphia, has recently concluded a long and thorough Grand Jury Investigation, in part showing the shuffling of predatory priests.

Your corporation must certainly have clients who are children or clients who have children. I am sure your corporation would not want to put vulnerable individuals at risk; certainly that is something contrary to your mission.

Here in New Jersey we have successfully removed a shield that previously protected Non-profits who harbored perpetrators who sexually abuse children. Pennsylvania has no such shield in place either.

I pray you will be attentive to this matter and be more vigilant in your hiring practices across the country so that children are not unwittingly placed at risk during a particularly vulnerable time in their families lives.

Rev. John P. Bambrick
Pastor/ Legislative Director Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests

CC: Lynne Abraham; Msgr. Desmond O'Connor, Odyssey Blue Bell, Phil.
Archdiocese