

# Bishop Accountability

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## Egan Resources – April 1–8, 2002

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### Statement of the Archdiocese of New York

April 3, 2002

<http://ny-archdiocese.org/dastatement0403.cfm>

Yesterday, the Archdiocese of New York forwarded to District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, of New York County, a list of cases involving Archdiocesan priests who have been accused of sexual misconduct with minors. The Archdiocese has been in discussions with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office during the past week to make the necessary arrangements for delivering this information. The Manhattan District Attorney has agreed to forward relevant information to other District Attorneys concerning cases in their jurisdiction.

The information forwarded to District Attorney Morgenthau is the result of a comprehensive review of the personnel files for the priests of the Archdiocese of New York covering the last 35 to 40 years.

The District Attorney has been provided with a summary of the complaints made against any Archdiocesan priest including the date and location of the alleged activity and the outcome of any legal proceedings that may have been taken place, along with the present status of the accused, if it is known.

It must be acknowledged that not all of the allegations have been substantiated. In addition, it must be noted that, in order to be as complete as possible, the Archdiocese has included for the District Attorney information concerning priests who have already been found guilty in a criminal proceeding or were the subject of a civil action, and individuals who were once priests and have since been reduced to the lay state.

The Archdiocese would like to express its gratitude to District Attorney Morgenthau for his assistance in ensuring that the relevant information is forwarded to the other District Attorneys. The Archdiocese stands ready to cooperate with District Attorney Morgenthau and with the other District Attorneys as well.

Stepinac grad claims sex abuse by priest

By Gary Stern and Noreen O'Donnell  
Journal News  
April 3, 2002

<http://www.thejournalnews.com/priests/03priest.html>

Kevin Mahoney seemed to have a classic Catholic upbringing, right out of a Bing Crosby movie.

Growing up in Croton-on-Hudson, he was an altar boy and a student at Holy Name of Mary Parish, where his father was a lector. Then, like his father before him, he set out to become a man at Archbishop Stepinac High School in White Plains.

At Stepinac, as part of the class of '76, he was captain of the football team and an A student, and he supported Mother Teresa's arm when she visited the school.

But now Mahoney, who turns 43 today, says his life was nearly ruined by a former Stepinac administrator, a priest. He says Monsignor William White took advantage of him sexually for three years, beginning in his senior year at Stepinac. Mahoney says he kept it a secret, fearing that no one would believe him, until 1997, when he told his parents and the Archdiocese of New York.

"If it was a Cub Scout leader, a teacher, I might have decked him," Mahoney said yesterday from Salem, Ore., where he has lived for a decade. "But it's different with a priest. He infiltrated my family, coming to Sunday dinner, for holidays. I just couldn't deal with it at all. I couldn't tell anyone."

Mahoney reached a \$100,000 settlement with the archdiocese in 1998, apparently ending the matter quietly. But the head of a Florida seminary, where White has taught for the past eight years, told the priest to leave the faculty last month after learning of Mahoney's allegations and the settlement.

Monsignor Stephen Bosso, rector of St. Vincent de Paul Regional Seminary in Boynton Beach, Fla., said he would have gotten rid of White sooner if the archdiocese had informed him of the settlement. "I wish they would have told me," he said.

Joseph Zwilling, spokesman for the archdiocese, said the archdiocese told the Florida seminary about everything in White's background.

"They were aware of it when we were aware of it," he said.

White, 69, became principal of Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx after leaving Stepinac, where he was dean of studies, during Mahoney's senior year. He later served at Holy Family Church in New Rochelle before taking a teaching position in Florida with the approval of Cardinal John J. O'Connor.

White is still a priest of the archdiocese, but he is currently without an assignment, Zwilling said. White could not be reached for comment.

New Rochelle Mayor Tim Idoni, who attended Holy Family Church while White was its pastor, was taken aback by the allegations against the priest.

"This is a complete surprise," Idoni said. "I'm sorry to hear it. He was always a nice guy to me."

Joseph Fosina, a New Rochelle councilman who knew White from Holy Family Church and Spellman High School, said he had a decent relationship with White but that some parishioners didn't like White's rigid leadership.

Mahoney contends that his troubles started when he suffered a serious football injury in his senior year. He says that White started visiting him in the hospital when he was depressed and vulnerable, and that White soon endeared himself to the Mahoney family.

Mahoney says White started taking him out for weekly dinners and, finally, to his room. He says White fondled him some 20 times over three years, including when he was home from Holy Cross College in Worcester, Mass.

As a 17-year-old high school student and then an 18- and 19-year-old college student, Mahoney was old enough to consent to an adult relationship. He says he understands that it may be difficult for many to see how he was abused. But he contends that for a vulnerable teen-ager, a manipulative priest who has gained the trust of one's family is a powerful force that is difficult to fight off.

"He became like part of the family and turned everything upside down," Mahoney said. "It wasn't just the physical abuse. By being a regular guest in my home, it was like continual psychological and emotional abuse. It's difficult to describe."

Mahoney says depression over what happened nearly destroyed him. He held 12 jobs in 14 years, developed a drinking problem and was failing his wife and his two sons, he says. He lost contact with all his classmates at Stepinac.

He says he began to make peace with his past after he talked to his parents and the archdiocese. He now works as a psychiatric nurse at a prison, sometimes with victims of sexual abuse.

"You know, my memories of Stepinac, aside from all this, are wonderful," Mahoney said. "I loved the kids, the dress code, the education, the discipline, the opportunity they provided for inner-city kids. There were a lot of great priests and nuns. To think, I almost made it out before anything happened."

## Cardinal Wants Panel to Weigh Allegations

By Robert Ingrassia  
(NY) Daily News  
April 4, 2002

Edward Cardinal Egan scrapped his controversial policy for handling child sexual abuse claims yesterday and unveiled a tougher stance.

Under the new rules, the Archdiocese of New York will convene an advisory panel of clergy members, laity, judges, lawyers and former prosecutors to decide whether to report abuse allegations to civil authorities.

The committee will base its decision on written statements from the victim and interviews that church officials conduct with the priest.

If the panel finds that a crime may have been committed, the allegation will be forwarded to the district attorney for possible prosecution.

But if the committee concludes that a priest's actions were "inappropriate and not potentially criminal in nature," the archdiocese may suspend the clergy member for up to two years or warn him to be "doubly careful about his behavior."

The policy replaces one that Egan announced last month. The archbishop said then that allegations would be sent to law enforcement only if church leaders found "reasonable cause" to believe they were true and victims didn't object.

That didn't go over well with parishioners or district attorneys. A Daily News/New York 1 poll conducted late last month found that 89% of Catholics in the city believe the church should turn over abuse allegations to civil authorities.

State lawmakers may soon trump Egan's new policy. An Assembly bill would add the clergy to a list of professions required to report all allegations. The law would give the clergy little discretion over which claims to report.

The bill's sponsor, Assemblyman Jack McEneny (D-Albany), said he wouldn't object if a religious institution sought advice about what to report.

"I would only have a problem with the advisory panel if it becomes a mechanism to delay reporting," he said.

Croton-on-Hudson priest removed from parish

By Melissa Klein  
Journal News  
April 7, 2002

<http://www.thejournalnews.com/priests/07priest.html>

Croton-on-Hudson — The priest at Holy Name of Mary Church has been removed from the parish because of "an allegation of inappropriate behavior from his past," according to an announcement read to parishioners last night.

The Rev. Kenneth Jesselli replaced another priest, the Rev. Gennaro Gentile, who had been accused of sexual abuse. A lawsuit alleging that Gentile had inappropriately touched two teen-agers was recently settled.

The announcement of Jesselli's removal, a copy of which was obtained by The Journal News, was apparently a form letter with the name of the priest referred to only as "Father Y" or "Father X."

"On behalf of the Archdiocese, may I say that we are sorry that this action was necessary, and pray that this will not cause you and the parish further pain," said the letter, which apparently was meant to be read to the parish by the replacement priest. "I would also like to remind you that not all allegations have been substantiated."

It was not clear last night if other priests had been removed by the Archdiocese of New York. Joseph Zwilling, a spokesman for the archdiocese, did not return calls seeking comment, and Jesselli's replacement, the Rev. Michael Keane, could not be reached.

The removal of Jesselli, coming just days after the archdiocese turned over past cases of sexual abuse involving priests to the Manhattan district attorney's office, signifies the church is handling such allegations with an unprecedented seriousness. Cardinal Edward Egan, head of the archdiocese, has been criticized for his handling of cases of sexual abuse when he was bishop of the Bridgeport Diocese in Connecticut from 1988 to 2000.

Gentile was allowed to stay as pastor of Holy Name of Mary after at least four families complained to the archdiocese in the 1990s that he improperly touched boys. One of those families, the Nauheimers of Croton, whose lawsuit was recently settled, said Gentile had massaged the shoulders of one of their sons with oil and had run his hands through the hair of the other son in a provocative way.

Gentile, whom many parishioners credited with giving new energy to the church, left Holy Name of Mary in 2000 and has been working at a church office in Poughkeepsie that deals with marriage annulments.

Mark Koch, a Croton resident, said his family's attendance at church had fallen off after the allegations surfaced about Gentile.

"It definitely left a bad taste," Koch said.

He said the archdiocese's response in removing a priest was the correct one if sexual abuse allegations had been made.

Jesselli came to Holy Name about two years ago and held the title of administrator, not the more senior title of pastor. He had previously worked at St. Anthony's Church in Yonkers and at St. Francis Xavier Church in the Bronx.

"I've worked with him on committees and so forth," said John Lally, a Croton resident who is a member of the parish council. "I found him hardworking. I found no hint of anything like that. It's a shock."

Lally said Jesselli took some time adjusting to the parish and had suffered from some unspecified health problems. He said Jesselli made himself available to meet individually with parishioners after

Sept. 11 and was working on programs with other clergy in Croton.

Lally said both Gentile and Jesselli did "very positive things."

Gaynell Cronin, a pastoral associate at the church, said Jesselli worked well with members of the parish and seemed to enjoy his work.

"We're just all kind of standing together in this bewilderment," said Cronin, a Croton resident.

She said it was unsettling and painful that allegations had been made against the last two priests to serve the church, but that parishioners would continue to support one another.

"They have really stayed together and continued to run programs and continued to reach out to the needy and the unfortunate," she said. "They've continued that through all of this."

### Egan Suspends Priests

6 accused of sexually abusing children in past

By Elizabeth Hays and Bill Hutchinson  
(NY) Daily News  
April 8, 2002

Edward Cardinal Egan has begun a crackdown on pedophile priests - suspending a half-dozen clerics in the past week because of child sex abuse allegations, it was revealed yesterday.

One priest relieved of his duties reportedly was the Rev. Kenneth Jesselli of the Holy Name of Mary Church in Croton-on-Hudson in Westchester. Jesselli had replaced the Rev. Gennaro (Father Jerry) Gentile, who also had been accused of sexual abuse.

Parishioners of the Holy Name of Mary Church were informed of Jesselli's removal in a letter from the New York Archdiocese that cited "an allegation of inappropriate behavior from his past."

The Archdiocese of New York told the six priests they were to immediately stop ministering and performing other priestly duties, church officials said yesterday.

"These six priests were priests who were in current archdiocesan assignments," said Joseph Zwilling, a spokesman for Egan. "They can't function as priests."

He declined to release details of the accusations against the six suspended priests.

The move comes just days after Egan turned over a report to Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, detailing 40 years of child sex abuse allegations against priests in the archdiocese.

'Not all . . . substantiated'

The accusations against the six suspended priests were included in the report, said a statement by the archdiocese.

But Zwilling said the archdiocese was not prompted into taking action against the priests by Morgenthau. "It was done by the archdiocese," Zwilling said.

The priests were not named "because not all of the allegations have been substantiated," the statement said.

Jesselli's removal was reported in yesterday's edition of The Journal News of Westchester, which obtained the archdiocese's letter to parishioners.

"On behalf of the archdiocese, may I say that we are sorry that this action was necessary, and pray

that this will not cause you and the parish further pain," the letter read.

Jesselli replaced Gennaro in 2000. A Daily News investigation published last month revealed a pattern of sexual abuse by Gennaro against two teenage brothers that led to a civil suit. The suit was settled out of court.

Hounded by charges that he didn't do enough to rein in pedophile priests while he was bishop in Bridgeport, Conn., Egan has been under pressure to quicken the pace of reporting sex abuse allegations to law enforcement officials. Protests at St. Patrick's Egan did not mention the action taken against the six priests during morning Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral yesterday.

Outside, a group of protesters slammed church officials for failing to crack down on sex abuse by priests. "A pedophile is a pedophile no matter what he is wearing," said protester Sonja Gurnee, 50, of Brooklyn.

"Enough with protecting their own," said Daniel Dugo, 31, a contractor from Bayside, Queens, who claims he was abused by a Brooklyn priest when he was 8.

"What about the victims?" he asked.

### Protesters Say Egan Must Go

By Roosevelt Joseph and Brad Hunter  
New York Post  
April 8, 2002

Two sisters who claim they were raped by a Trenton priest years ago were among a handful of protesters yesterday who demanded Edward Cardinal Egan resign over the spreading sexual-abuse scandal.

"Demand the truth! Support the abused not the abusers!" said the sign carried by Susan Renehan, 53, who told The Post her harrowing account of abuse at the hands of the trusted priest.

The Southbridge, Mass., woman said her torment began with a French kiss when she was 11, and continued for three years. Her sister, Therese, claims she was assaulted by the same priest.

"I could remember the feeling of going to the shower and trying to scrub the shame and pain away," Renehan said. "It was horrible, absolute terror."

But like other victims of predator priests, Renehan suffered in silence, not telling a soul about the abuse in order to protect her devout family.

Now she believes it's the time for the church to take responsibility for heinous crimes committed long ago.

"This is only the tip of the iceberg," she said. "There is a lot more people to come out."

Leaders of Trenton's Catholic diocese say they're ready to face the music. The diocese says a recent review turned up 13 cases of sexual misconduct involving priests and minors.

Trenton Bishop James Smith has removed one accused priest. The other 12 have either died or were relieved of their duties long ago, diocese officials told The Star-Ledger of Newark. The priests' names were not released.

"In the few cases in which complaints were made, the diocese took pro-active steps to investigate charges of sexual misconduct and, where necessary, removed the priests from active ministry," Smith said.

The bishop said he took the "very painful" decision to remove one of the accused himself. The priest in question had been working in a desk job and was not in contact with children, Smith said.

The priest was accused of misdeeds 12 years ago and sent away for psychological evaluation. A "very positive" report suggested he was at a low risk of harming anyone.

"[But] in today's environment, I just felt that decision had to be revisited," Smith said. "Our first priority has to be the protection of children."

## Cardinal Gives Boot to N.Y. 'Suspect' Six

By Cathy Burke  
New York Post  
April 8, 2002

Six New York-area Catholic priests tainted by sexual-misconduct charges have been asked by Edward Cardinal Egan to leave their jobs, church officials said last night.

The six were on a list of alleged sexual predators from the Archdiocese of New York - the nation's third largest - sent to Manhattan prosecutors last week, officials said.

[Photo Caption - Rev. Jesselli: "Inappropriate behavior."]

None of the priests was named in a statement by archdiocese officials last night, and not all worked in parishes, officials said. Not all the charges have been substantiated, they added.

But parishioners at Holy Name of Mary Church in Croton-on-Hudson, Westchester, learned at Mass yesterday that their administrator, the Rev. Kenneth Jesselli, had been replaced due to "an allegation of inappropriate behavior from the past," parish council member Joseph Lally said.

The action by Egan was the latest in a ballooning sexual-abuse scandal that has rocked Roman Catholics around the country.

Since January, dozens of priests out of more than 47,000 nationwide have been suspended or forced to resign.

Catholic bishops and cardinals, including Egan and Brooklyn's Bishop Thomas Daily, have since been criticized for how they have handled the problem.

"The priests in question have been informed that they are not to present themselves as priests or exercise their priestly ministry publicly at least until the matter is further clarified or resolved," last night's terse statement from the archdiocese said.

The statement said information about the six priests had been included in "information forwarded earlier this week . . . to District Attorney Robert Morgenthau."

Archdiocese spokesman Joseph Zwilling refused further comment.

The news of Jesselli's removal hit Holy Name of Mary parishioners like a thunderbolt.

"Nobody knew," Lally said, adding that the replacement priest, the Rev. Michael Keane, "expressed the understanding at how upsetting this was to the parish. Basically, he asked us to pray for Father Jesselli."

The removal of Jesselli was a double whammy for the parish, where the Rev. Gennaro Gentile also had been accused of sexual abuse in a lawsuit alleging he inappropriately touched two teens. The lawsuit was recently settled.

Jesselli was brought into the parish just a year and a half ago to replace the shamed priest, Lally noted.

"We've been unsettled here in the last few months, where we've had two men who've done wonderful work with the parishioners, but then there are these allegations," Lally said. "Father Ken is really a shock . . . I had no hint of anything like that."

The Archdiocese of New York oversees 405 parishes, representing 2.4 million Catholics, in Manhattan, Staten Island, The Bronx and upstate.

St. Joan priest removed

By Blair Craddock  
Journal News  
April 8, 2002

<http://www.thejournalnews.com/priests/08priest.html>

SLOATSBURG — A Rockland priest, removed abruptly from his parish on allegations of past sexual impropriety, said he is no child abuser.

The Rev. John Gallant, pastor of St. Joan of Arc Roman Catholic Church, said yesterday that the allegations against him were from 22 years ago and involved an 18-year-old woman.

He became the second Rockland priest in the past week to face sex allegations. He also is the second priest in the region in two days to be asked to leave his current assignment.

The New York Archdiocese announced yesterday that six priests had received such instructions. Gallant said the archdiocese removed him based on information released Wednesday to the Manhattan District Attorney's Office.

The announcement and Gallant's address to parishioners at both morning Masses brought tears and pledges of support.

"Everyone in the parish is upset," Valerie Kafka said. "He's a wonderful priest."

On Wednesday, the Rev. William Burke of the Marian Shrine in Stony Point was named as a defendant in a lawsuit in Florida, accusing him of repeatedly molesting a 14-year-old boy in 1987 in Florida. Burke is now at a facility that provides counseling for clergy, said the vice provincial of his order, the Salesians of Don Bosco.

Parishioners at Holy Name of Mary Church in Croton-on-Hudson learned Saturday that a priest there, the Rev. Kenneth Jesselli, was removed based on what the archdiocese, in a form letter, called an "allegation of inappropriate behavior from his past."

In Sloatsburg, stunned parishioners at St. Joan of Arc heard a new priest, the Rev. Frank Diaz, read the brusque language of the form letter to them.

"The archdiocese has dispatched me to inform you that your pastor has been asked to leave the parish due to an allegation of inappropriate behavior," Diaz read from the letter. "We are sorry that this action was necessary. ... We would like to remind you that not all allegations have been substantiated."

As many parishioners began to cry, Diaz included a prayer for the departing priest in the litany of prayers for the pope, the sick and peace in the Middle East.

"I look forward to continuing the good work that Father John has been doing," Diaz said. "Father, you will be missed."

Then, at the conclusion of the service, he allowed Gallant to address the parish.

"When I first spoke to you as your pastor, I promised you I would always be upfront," Gallant, dressed in street clothes, told parishioners. "The complaint is based on an alleged incident with an 18-year-old girl. I have never abused a minor boy or girl in my entire life."

He said he was asked by the archdiocese to leave his post at St. Joan of Arc while an investigation takes place. He did not comment on the veracity of the allegations involving the then-18-year-old accuser.

While the archdiocese would not confirm that Gallant was one of the six priests removed, the announcement said the six have been forbidden to "present themselves as priests or exercise their priestly ministry publicly, at least until the matter is further clarified or resolved."

"Not all of the allegations have been substantiated," the announcement said, and therefore, "the Archdiocese of New York will not be releasing the names" of the six.

A spokesman for the archdiocese, Joseph Zwilling, declined to say yesterday whether the allegations against Gallant involve an 18-year-old woman. "If there was the potential that a law may have been broken, we forwarded the information to the district attorney," he said.

Many parishioners wept yesterday as they left the noon Mass. Some exchanged embraces.

Kara Mega said the pastor had shown kindness to her family, adding that she would give him her support. "I don't believe the allegations," Mega said.

Another St. Joan of Arc member, Lou Castro, was shaken to think that Gallant could have been caught up in the church's child-abuse scandal, based on what the priest said was one incident, involving a woman old enough to vote. "This priest is totally ethical," Castro said. "And I don't know if my life could stand this kind of scrutiny."

"He handled it bravely," said Castro's wife, Joyce. "I (wish) to God more priests that have problems would come to their parishioners. And today is Mercy Sunday, and I think we should keep that in mind."