

Priest C

Priest C wreaked havoc by sexually abusing children during his first two assignments as an associate pastor. For this, he was rewarded by being named a pastor. He left behind a trail of alcohol abuse, depression, anger, and disillusionment.

At first, the parish altar boys thought this young priest was fun. He took them to baseball games, amusement parks and to play sports. He also fondled their genitals, beginning with boys as young as age ten. When the boys questioned the behavior he told them it was a, “normal guy thing”. As adults, the boys met to share their stories with victims from other parishes. The men were not strangers to one another; *Priest C* had introduced them as children. They did not know that, in fact, they all shared the same dark secret.

Priest C had a conscience, at first. Indeed, after abusing a boy in his first assignment he went to the pastor and told him about it. At *Priest C's* request the pastor spoke to the boy to find out if he was all right and to assure him he should not feel guilty, as he had done nothing wrong. Once the boy, who was 12, assured the pastor that he was not suffering the matter was dropped. Having acted, confessed and been forgiven *Priest C* went on to abuse boys with abandon.

The pastor told no one of *Priest C's* admission. He also knew that *Priest C* abused alcohol yet never spoke to him about it. Over the years, the pastor remained friendly with *Priest C*. When *Priest C* was eventually sent for psychological treatment in 1998 he admitted to the pastor that he had abused additional underage boys throughout his subsequent assignments.

Despite this knowledge of continued sexual abuse, the pastor never told the Director of Priest Personnel¹⁴ or any other Diocesan official. In fact, he never told anyone about the abuse that he was aware took place from at least 1979, into the 1990's. He did know, however, that the conduct was improper and possibly criminal.

The pastor told the Grand Jury that the climate in the Diocese of Rockville Centre was to keep sexual abuse quiet. Issues and allegations about criminal conduct and the sexual abuse of children were not discussed in the Diocese. He candidly told the Grand Jury that parishioners were placed at risk because of this policy. Nevertheless, even acknowledging he knew of this risk to parishioners, he recommended *Priest C* to become a pastor.

A parish priest in *Priest C*'s second assignment testified in the Grand Jury. He explained that immediately upon taking up residence in the rectory, he noticed that *Priest C* was entertaining boys in his room. When he spoke to the pastor about this, he was told that *Priest C* was the pastor's friend and that the pastor could not help in this matter. The associate repeated his concern on a subsequent occasion to the pastor who again advised that he could not help him. The Grand Jury finds that this pastor turned a blind eye to the behavioral problems of *Priest C*.

In his second assignment, *Priest C* insinuated himself into the social lives of a number of parish families. He became a fixture in their households and with their children. *Priest C* was included on family vacations, trips to the beach, golf outings and many parties. Long before they knew *Priest C* had sexually abused their children, the families grew concerned about his exposing them to alcohol. Eventually, one family complained about this to the Diocese and, after

¹⁴ The Director of Priest Personnel works in Diocesan headquarters and has a variety of duties and responsibilities including, but not limited to, arranging for the placement and transfer of priests, assisting priests whose personal or situational needs require attention, assisting in conflict situations involving priests' performance and holding exit interviews with priests at the time of resignation. (Grand Jury Exhibit 161). The Director of Priest Personnel is elected to this position by the priests of the Diocese.

a meeting outlining his problems with alcohol abuse and parish children, *Priest C* promised to attend AA.

As the families would later painfully discover, *Priest C* was sexually abusing and performing acts of oral and anal sodomy¹⁵ upon their children, throughout this entire time period. For most of the boys the abuse took on a recurring theme. The boys and *Priest C* would drink, the boys would pass out or fall asleep and awaken to *Priest C* masturbating them and/or performing oral sex. The abuse occurred where there was an opportunity; in *Priest C's* rectory room, at the beach, on camping trips and on a ski trip and without regard to witnesses. Indeed, on at least one occasion, other boys witnessed *Priest C* orally sodomizing one of their friends.

One of the families is haunted by the fear that *Priest C* abused their son who died of natural causes at the age of fifteen. (Grand Jury Exhibit 43). This anguished family wrote to the Diocese:

One of our sons died suddenly in 1987 at age 15. It was our son (name omitted) who had the unhealthy friendship with *Priest C*. In light of the situation with *Priest C* and because of (name omitted) untimely death we will never know for sure if he was a victim of *Priest C's* pedophilia. This is a question my husband and I will have to wrestle with for the rest of our lives. *Priest C* was a big part of (name omitted) life and given *Priest C's* tendencies with the other young boys, it is difficult for us to believe that (name omitted) escaped *Priest C's* abuse. I do know that my other son was one of *Priest C's* many victims. Unfortunately for him and the other young boys the statute of limitations has expired and they have no legal recourse under the current law. How sad for these young boys. (Grand Jury Exhibit 43).¹⁶

¹⁵ Certain terms used in this report to describe sexual activity are based upon NY Penal Law definitions. Therefore, sodomy means contact between the penis and the anus, the mouth and the penis, or the mouth and the vulva. PL §130.00(1)

¹⁶ In a letter written to Diocesan officials during this time period, *Priest C*, commenting on the death of this fifteen-year old boy, calls him one of his closest friends. It is remarkable that a man in his thirties would refer to a fifteen-year-old boy in this fashion and, yet, there was no comment by any Diocesan official about this. (Grand Jury Exhibit 9E).

Priest C's drinking, and entertaining boys in his rectory rooms, was open and notorious. There seemed to be a constant party underway in his private rooms in the rectory. Visitors were loud and boisterous. Complaints by another priest about this to the pastor and to the parish Deacon were ignored.¹⁷ The Deacon especially felt, that the priest who had complained about *Priest C*, was simply trying to cause division in the parish.¹⁸

The pastor in this assignment also noted drinking issues with *Priest C*. So did the parish staff. The pastor told the Grand Jury that he knew of only one occasion when *Priest C* brought young boys into his private residence. He was unaware that *Priest C* was drinking with underage minors until later on. The pastor offered that *Priest C* frequently broke the rules of conduct for the rectory and he felt his personality and outgoing gregarious nature were a mask designed to protect or insulate him from accountability. He denied knowledge of any sexual abuse committed by *Priest C* until 1998, when *Priest C* finally entered treatment. He did acknowledge, however, that another priest in the parish told him that *Priest C* was having boys in his room and was drinking with them. Although aware that *Priest C* violated his policies and directives, and aware of his drinking problem, the pastor never confronted *Priest C*, because his judgment was swayed by his affable personality. In fact, the pastor recommended *Priest C* for his own pastorate.

¹⁷ On one occasion, a priest from the Diocese of Brooklyn visiting a friend in the rectory observed the party going on in *Priest C's* rectory room. He walked into *Priest C's* room and expressed his disapproval. He was met with an angry stare from *Priest C*.

¹⁸ At one point a seminarian assigned to the parish was frightened by *Priest C's* erratic behavior. One night, while the seminarian was asleep, *Priest C* entered his room quoting scripture. The seminarian retreated to a corner of his bed and held back his arm so he could hit *Priest C* if he had to. After *Priest C* left the seminarian barred his door with a chair. The next morning he reported this to another priest who told the pastor. Once again nothing happened. This seminarian left the priesthood because he was disillusioned with rampant homosexuality, alcoholism and child abuse that he observed involving priests.

An argument between two brothers about excessive drinking led to the discovery of *Priest C's* sexual abuse of children.¹⁹ The news spread through the parish and other victims came forward. The mother of a victim became the leader and spokesperson for the abused children of the parish. She contacted a nun she knew, who suggested they include the parish Deacon, when they met with officials from the Diocese. By this time *Priest C* had become a pastor of a large and influential parish. The meeting took place at the seminary in Huntington. None of the victims were present, by design. However, one of the boys who had witnessed *Priest C* orally sodomizing one of his friends, volunteered to attend the meeting and related what he saw. The nun was distressed when she was told that unless the actual victims came forward nothing was going to happen to *Priest C*. After the meeting, she called Diocesan officials, to express her anger and to warn that more and more victims were coming forward with complaints that *Priest C* had sexually abused them. She knew that there were victims from different parishes,²⁰ that *Priest C* had been responsible for introducing them, and that they were talking to each other. She cautioned the Diocese that the anger of the victims and their families was about to boil over.

Two days later another meeting took place and this time one of the victims was present. The aforementioned nun, and the parish Deacon, were there too. A priest who was involved in, and had responsibility in the Diocese for, cases of this type also joined this second meeting. This priest was also an attorney, although this fact was not disclosed to the victims or their family members. He identified himself as the Bishop's representative. Prior to the start of the meeting, this priest told the nun that the meeting was a waste of time because the statute of limitations had

¹⁹ This argument was after the abuse of the one brother had stopped. This victim described the abuse as stopping because he "got the feeling he was done with me. I was too old for him"

²⁰ In fact, the nun believes that *Priest C* abused as many as thirty-four boys.

expired. Her response was heartfelt, she said, “You bastard. These people are hurting. Why do you care about the statute of limitations? That’s not why we are here”

The meeting was very tense as *Priest C’s* history of sexually abusing children was graphically discussed; unfortunately, the one victim who was present decided not to share his story. This victim later explained to the Grand Jury that he didn’t want to give the Diocese any personal information because he didn’t trust them. The families were disturbed to learn that there was no reference in *Priest C’s* file to the earlier meeting about his drinking with their children. They requested that a full investigation of all *Priest C’s* activities with children in his prior assignments be conducted. The families were told that the Diocese would not do this, that the victims would have to come forward on their own, and that the Diocese would do nothing if that did not happen. During a break in the meeting, the parish Deacon approached the priest who had identified himself as the Bishop’s representative, to express his dismay at the official position of the Diocese. He pointedly asked if *Priest C* was going to be removed. The Deacon believed that there was enough evidence to make an arrest of *Priest C* had the statute of limitations not lapsed²¹. He was told that at this point there were only, “allegations”, and no determination as to *Priest C’s* status would be made on that basis. The Deacon was furious and told the Bishop’s representative that *Priest C* must be removed.

At the conclusion of the meeting none of the families were aware what, if any, action would be taken against *Priest C*. They learned the next day that he had, in fact, been removed as pastor and sent for a psychiatric evaluation.

²¹ In a phone call to the District Attorney’s Office, the deacon had learned that the statute of limitations at the time was five years.

Less than two weeks later, *Priest C* was back at work. After learning this, the victim's mother who was acting as the spokesperson for the families, called Diocesan headquarters and was shocked to discover that no one there even knew *Priest C* had returned. To the families this was appalling. They questioned why *Priest C* had not been treated and why he was being left unsupervised.

The families were assured that *Priest C* would receive treatment, although somewhere out of the country. They asked, but were not told, where. After *Priest C* left for his treatment, they learned he had written an open letter to his parish explaining that he would be away because of, "stress related issues".²² This news generated another phone call to the Diocese from the families. They expressed dismay that *Priest C* was permitted to misrepresent his situation to the parishioners. Later, when *Priest C* returned to the parish, he lied from the pulpit about where he had been and why. Diocesan officials did not think this was a problem. Moreover, when the families learned that *Priest C* was being welcomed back with a party they were furious. Another complaint to Diocesan officials was made but the party went forward.

Eventually, because of continuing pressure from the families of his victims, *Priest C* was forced to resign his pastorate. However, he was reassigned as chaplain at a medical facility located within the Diocese and given a weekend mass assignment.

The assignment was made even after the Diocese had received cautionary reports from the treatment facility concerning *Priest C's* behavior. Included in the reports are notations from the treatment professionals that *Priest C's* sexual abuse of children had been deliberate and

²² The Grand Jury reviewed notes reflecting a discussion between Diocesan officials and the Diocesan attorney about the proper language for a bulletin announcement in the parish explaining *Priest C's* leave. Nowhere do they discuss the actual reason he is leaving. (Grand Jury Exhibits 9R, 9Q). Two parishioners also wrote to Diocesan officials asking for an honest explanation for *Priest C's* departure and questioning Diocesan secrecy and stonewalling. (Grand Jury Exhibits 9G, 9K).

planned. A follow-up report from the facility indicated that, *Priest C* had acknowledged that he was still attracted to adolescents and, indeed, strongly considered himself to be one. (Grand Jury Exhibits 9Z, 9W). This conclusion should not have surprised anyone in the Diocese; they had already been told by the 30+-year-old *Priest C* that a fifteen year old had been one of his closest friends.

No one in an official position called the families to advise them of this. The pastors of the parishes where *Priest C* was given the weekend mass assignments were not told of his history of sexually abusing children.²³ In fact, the families were told by Diocesan officials that eventually *Priest C* would be returned to parish ministry

The father of a victim of *Priest C* was propelled to express his rage at Diocesan officials after he saw *Priest C* marching in religious garb at a holiday parade in New York City.

After a nasty verbal confrontation with *Priest C*, who apologized for his actions and said he was trying to get better, these distraught and angry parents wrote a letter to the Diocese. In it, they requested that *Priest C* never be returned to parish ministry:

Pedophilia is a disease that cannot be cured and needs constant supervision and guidance...As a family who was victimized by his actions with scars forever etched on our hearts, we do not think this is an unreasonable request.” (Grand Jury Exhibit 43).

Thereafter, the Diocese suggested another meeting. The families, many who had met with Diocesan officials before, were shocked at how little they seemed to know about their experiences with *Priest C*. The meeting was concluded with a request by the families for a face-to-face meeting with *Priest C*. This did not occur because he refused. After this, the families

²³ In *Priest C's* secret archive file, there is a signed statement from one of the pastors indicating that he had discussed *Priest C's* history with him and reviewed his confidential file. The statement is written in the present tense. A simple observer would never know that *Priest C* had actually been assigned to the parish for two years before this was done. (Grand Jury Exhibit 50).

never heard from Diocesan officials again, even after they wrote additional letters requesting information and expressing their dismay at how they felt the situation was continuing to be mishandled. (Grand Jury Exhibits 47,48).

During this time, *Priest C* requested a change in residence from a Diocesan facility to a parish rectory. He was sent briefly to a parish to reside in a rectory while maintaining his Chaplaincy at the hospital and his weekend duty. The pastor of that parish was offered the opportunity to review the personnel file but did not. He did not feel capable of being part of a therapeutic group for someone with *Priest C's* problems. Thereafter, *Priest C* was returned to the Diocesan facility.

The Grand Jury also reviewed an undated Newsday article.²⁴ The article recounted an auto accident wherein the driver was intoxicated and caused the death of a passenger, his sister. The driver of the vehicle was the boy who had witnessed an act of sexual abuse committed by *Priest C*, and whose brother was also a victim of *Priest C*. The Newsday article was maintained in *Priest C's* personnel file and copies were distributed to other members of the Diocesan team that handled allegations of priest sexual abuse, some of whom were attorneys. The Grand Jury finds that a fair interpretation of the reason for the dissemination of this article was so that the victim's arrest for driving while intoxicated, the accident and related death of his sister could be used against him should his allegations of priest misconduct ever become public. A high-ranking Diocesan official admitted that this was not a pastoral response by the church to this tragedy.

²⁴ Grand Jury Exhibit 9N