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Family's Hell: Priest Molested All Five Kids, \$25m Suit Says

By Kieran Crowley
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Five brothers and sisters from the same Long Island family have filed a \$25 million lawsuit against the Catholic Church, claiming that religious officials covered up their sexual abuse as children by the same priest.

Dick Regan and his two brothers and sisters filed the lawsuit against the late Rev. Daniel Babis and Bishop William Murphy, alleging abuse and a "cover-up" going back decades.

Three of the victims in the legal action filed by lawyer John Aretakis in Nassau County Supreme Court - which alleges sex abuse in Howard Beach, Queens, Long Island and in Canada - are identified only as "John Doe" or "Jane Doe."

Regan, a former cop, said he always knew that he and one of his sisters were molested by the "evil" Babis, starting in the mid-1950s - but discovered only a few months ago that three other siblings had also been carrying the same terrible secret.

When his sister Joann reported the abuse to her parents in 1968, Regan said his father, also a cop, confronted Babis. The priest denied the charge - ending the abuse and possibly preventing the abuse of three other younger siblings.

Regan claims the priest carried a licensed pistol and he feared there might be gunplay. "I thought to myself, 'I may have to kill a priest tonight,' but it was never spoken of again in the family."

"I'm shocked," said Regan's 82-year-old mother, Josephine Regan. "I can't understand how the children kept this from me. I'm brokenhearted but I do pray for him [Babis] and I'm also praying for my children." Mrs. Regan said Babis denied abusing Joann. "I begged my husband, 'please, please, don't hurt a priest.' I never saw Father Babis again." Babis is dead but the church that allegedly protected him is still here, said Regan. "I'm coming forward because, by doing so, I believe I can help other survivors start their healing. The kids in my family cannot be the only kids Babis abused."

Regan's sister Joann said she remembers herself and another brother being molested by Babis, a family friend who took them on trips - and kneeled at their bedside, not to pray, but to fondle them.

"He sexually abused me and took photographs of me," Joann, a victim of flashbacks, recalled tearfully. "I also witnessed my brother being abused."

"I always pretended to be sleeping. He always came to me in the night. Then he would finish with me and go to my brother. I would look at Father Babis' feet as he kneeled next to my brother's cot and . . ." she said, trailing off.

Her brother, who asked not to be named, said he remembered Babis' "trembling hands" touching him.

The family's lawyer, John Aretakis, said he believes the case represents the highest number of siblings in one family molested by the same priest in New York state.

The Rockville Centre Diocese "had a system in place to deceive and manipulate victims," said

Aretakis. "Years later, the horrific Regan case demonstrates the church is still acting the same."

The lawsuit charges the church knew of the abuse and transferred the Rev. Daniel Babis from one parish to another and then to Florida, where he died in 1978.

The Rockville Centre Diocese declined to comment. However, a spokeswoman for the Brooklyn Archdiocese said they are investigating the charge and "taking it seriously."

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