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## Witness Reports Fondling by Priest

By Ellis Henican  
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In vivid detail, a former Bronx high school student testified yesterday about how he says he was molested by a Roman Catholic priest he had sought out for counseling.

But under cross-examination by the priest's attorney, the teenager admitted confusion on several aspects of his story, including what year the alleged assault occurred.

The Rev. Bernard Lynch, 41, is being tried on sexual-abuse charges before State Supreme Court Justice Burton Roberts in the Bronx. If convicted, Lynch faces up to seven years in prison.

Lynch's alleged victim, now a 19-year-old actor, spent all day yesterday on the witness stand. Under questioning by Assistant Bronx District Attorney Sean Walsh, the young man said that Lynch was chaplain at Mount St. Michael Academy in the North Bronx while he was a student there.

He developed a close relationship with the easy-going, plain-talking priest, the teenager testified. Their conversations included frequent jokes about sex. "He was a touchy-feelie person," he said. "None of us thought of it in a bad way."

During formal counseling sessions, the young man said, he had confided to the priest that he was confused about his own sexual orientation. Lynch "said I should experience a sexual relationship with another man and find out what it was like," he said.

Then one evening in January, 1985, when the student was 14, he testified, he visited Lynch's apartment in Riverdale, seeking the priest's help on a psychology paper. When he entered the apartment, he said, he couldn't help noticing a picture of Hermaphroditus, the mixed-sex figure of Greek mythology, revealing a female breast and male genitals.

The priest "didn't clear the table, but he went over and sat on the couch," the young man testified. "He started to touch my leg. He asked me how I was coping sexually . . . He started to rub my leg. Then, he started to, like, roughhouse. He pulled me down on the floor."

By the time he broke free, the young man said, the priest had fondled him.

"I said, 'Please, no, stop,' " he said.

The young man said he continues to be haunted by that night. "I know it happened, and I know he's going to deny it," the young man said.

On cross-examination, defense attorney Michael Kennedy questioned the witness about a letter he had written earlier this week to prosecutor Walsh. In it, he said he wanted to back out of testifying, and he that he had been "cajoled" into continuing with the case.

"This document was written out of anger - anger and confusion," the young man said.

Kennedy then questioned the witness about the picture in Lynch's apartment. "I could tell there was a penis there," the teenager said. "I'm almost positive."

Kennedy then brought the picture into the courtroom. "Can you show the judge where the penis is in the picture?" the lawyer asked.

"There is no penis there, your honor," he answered softly.

Later, Kennedy presented the young man with a copy of his high school transcript. It showed he had taken a psychology course in 1986 - not 1985 as he had recalled.

Was it possible, Roberts asked, that the event he had spoken of had in fact occurred in 1986?

"That is possible, your honor," he said.

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