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Accuser Tells His Story to Bishop Las Vegas Man's Memory of Alleged Molestation Was " a Heavy Weight," He Says

By Mike McAndrew and Renee K. Gadoua
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Charles DeCarlo Sr. traveled more than 2,000 miles and spent \$850 to tell a decades-old story to Bishop James Moynihan.

Wednesday, he said the trip from Las Vegas was worth every penny.

"I just got 52 years out of my system," DeCarlo said, after telling the bishop that Monsignor Francis J. Furfaro molested him as a 15-year-old boy in 1949 in an Oswego church rectory. "This has been a heavy weight on me for years."

DeCarlo, a former Syracuse resident, is one of five men who in the past month publicly accused the retired, 84-year-old priest of molesting them as minors during the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s and 1980s, while Furfaro was the pastor at St. Joseph Church.

In an April 12 interview, Furfaro admitted sexual contact with only one minor.

Furfaro, who lives in Camillus, and his lawyer have declined to comment on the allegations since then.

DeCarlo said Moynihan hugged him, prayed for him and repeatedly apologized to him during their private meeting.

"It was worth it. It was really worth it," DeCarlo, 68, said. "Bishop Moynihan was a good person to talk to. Now I can just go back home and try to forget about this."

Danielle Cummings, spokeswoman for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, said Moynihan apologized to DeCarlo "for whatever hurt was inflicted upon him."

The bishop assured DeCarlo he would take action, Cummings said.

DeCarlo said he asked Moynihan to remove Furfaro from the priesthood. Moynihan did not commit to any specific response.

Diocesan officials would not say whether they had been in contact with Furfaro.

Emil Rossi, Furfaro's lawyer, declined to comment on any discussions about Furfaro's status with the diocese.

He said many people have called or written to him expressing support for Furfaro.

"They hope he will be known and remembered for matters far beyond this area, and for the immense service he has performed for the church and the community," Rossi said.

In another Syracuse diocese case, Cummings this week confirmed the diocese paid a victim in 1988 to settle a sexual abuse complaint against Monsignor H. Charles Sewall of Utica.

She did not know the amount or the specific allegations of the incident, which occurred in the late 1970s. In a statement released May 3, Sewall admitted to some sexual misconduct and apologized to the community.

The bishop is continuing to review a separate allegation that Sewall had sexual contact with a 13-year-old boy in 1975, she said.

Cummings also confirmed an awards dinner for Sewall was canceled in April as a result of allegations of sexual abuse. Sewall, who is retired, was principal at Utica Catholic Academy, which later merged with Notre Dame, from 1967 through 1979. Sewall also served as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Utica.

He was to receive an Outstanding Alumni award at a ceremony April 26 sponsored by the Greater Utica Area Catholic Schools.

"We had received calls from some people saying this isn't a person who should be given an award," Cummings said.

At the start of an anti-abortion Mass in Utica Friday, Moynihan apologized to the community for Sewall's sexual misconduct.

"I know the people of Utica are hurting," Moynihan said at the annual event at Holy Trinity Church, Utica. "It is difficult to accept that a person so revered in the community for his service and leadership could actually admit to sexual misconduct. ... May I also offer my personal apologies for all of the harm and anger this time in the church is invoking on all of our people."

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