

# Former Iona Prep student alleges abuse by Irish Christian Brothers, culture of silence

Frank Esposito, Rockland/Westchester Journal News Published 6:00 a.m. ET April 11, 2019 | Updated 8:27 a.m. ET April 14, 2019

*Lawyers for former Iona Prep student Richard Cardillo believe the lawsuit they plan to file in August will reveal the sexual abuse and secrecy in the Christian Brothers order.*

Richard Cardillo grew up in Westchester and looked like any other student at Iona Prep during the early 1970s.

He ran cross country and worked on the student newspaper after school. He sang for the Iona Prep Players where he performed in musicals during the spring.

Cardillo even joined the Irish Christian Brothers, the religious order that ran the school, in 1976 as a college student.

He also had a secret that he has carried with him over 40 years.

Now he is breaking his silence on what he says was a culture of sexual abuse and secrecy that was pervasive in the Irish Christian Brothers order. ([/story/news/local/westchester/new-rochelle/2019/03/01/iona-prep-irish-christian-brothers-pavlica-accused/2979265002/](https://www.westchesterjournalnews.com/story/news/local/westchester/new-rochelle/2019/03/01/iona-prep-irish-christian-brothers-pavlica-accused/2979265002/)) including at his former high school at Iona Prep in New Rochelle.

Cardillo alleges in an interview with The Journal News/lohud that a faculty member at Iona Prep sexually abused him, and that in exchange for his silence he was allowed to join the order he thought was his only option to deal with his sexuality.

He also alleged that the order's higher-ups were aware of the member's sexual abuse and moved the brother to various schools instead of reprimanding him.

Cardillo, 60, lives in New York City and decided to come forward after new allegations of abuse have arisen, and a new law allowing more time for alleged victims to sue. (<https://www.nysenate.gov/issues/child-victims-act-cva>) He also wants to unburden himself after 43 years of silence.

"I suffered not being open, keeping secrets and not being transparent with the man I am," Cardillo said.



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Cardillo's claim comes after a wave of accusations against a religious order that ran private schools throughout the country broke in February.

Cardillo's lawyers think they can help expose more of Brother Salvatore Ferro's alleged abuse.

Cardillo is jointly represented by the Marsh Law Firm, based in New York, and Pfau Cochran Vertetis Amala PLLC, based in Seattle — two law firms working together on sex abuse cases in New York after passage of the Child Victims Act.

"We believe that Brother Ferro was one of the more prolific abusers in the Christian Brothers, and that he was transferred from school to school because of this sexual abuse," Jason Amala, of Pfau Cochran Vertetis Amala PLLC, said.

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## A trip upstate

As a sophomore in Ferro's English class, Cardillo heard the rumors and warnings to stay away from Ferro.

Then in 1974, Cardillo's junior year, Ferro asked if he'd like to take a trip to Rochester with him and a few other students to see a musical. Despite the rumors, Cardillo said Ferro's offer to see Camelot — a well-liked musical — appealed to him.

When they got to the hotel, Cardillo's interest turned into worry.

Ferro, who is still alive but could not be reached for comment, told the boys that there was a mix up with the rooms, Cardillo said. The two other boys would stay in one room, while Ferro and Cardillo had to share one, and it only had one bed.



Father Salvatore Ferro, from the 1971 Bishop Kearney High School yearbook (Photo: Sean Lahman)

Cardillo claims that Ferro tried to give him liquor before bed, which he refused. When they went to bed, Ferro began touching and kissing Cardillo.

When Cardillo broke free, Ferro started to berate him, Cardillo said. He didn't tell anyone about the incident at the time. He said he felt guilty.

"I thought I did something wrong," Cardillo said.

## Not Ferro's first posting

Ferro is one of six current members of the order on a list of Christian Brothers with more than one abuse claim against him.

The Irish Christian Brothers released the list as part of the bankruptcy case, in which the order settled the claims of over 430 alleged victims and agreed to pay them some money.



FIRST ROW: Sister Austin, Miss Jean Zimmer, Sister Judith, Miss Eileen Fraher. SECOND ROW: Brother Daniel S. Adams, Mr. Douglas Sullivan, Sister Evelyn Marie, Brother Salvatore A. Ferro, Mrs. Joan Sperrazza, Mrs. Sue LaFica (missing).

Photo of Ferro from the 1972 Bishop Kearney HS yearbook (Photo: Bishop Kearney highschool yearbook)

Claims against the brothers were never validated, as part of the bankruptcy settlement agreement.

Ferro worked at a number of Christian Brothers schools, including Bishop Kearney High School in Rochester in the early 1970s, Iona Prep in the mid 1970s and Bergen Catholic, located in Oradell, New Jersey, during part of the 1980s.

The Christian Brothers provided the following statement:

"The province is aware of this abuse claim, which was filed in 2012 as part of the notice of claim process in the bankruptcy proceeding — in which the claimant received a financial settlement. The design of the bankruptcy process was not to test the validity of any of the claims, but rather to establish a compensation fund for the claimants. In terms of the alleged conversation more than 40 years ago with the then-provincial leader, the province cannot test the validity of this conversation because the brother is deceased."

## A call to the Christian Brothers

Cardillo wanted to join the Christian Brothers. He felt a call to the religious life, but there was another reason. Cardillo wanted to hide his homosexuality.

"I was fearful as a kid, I kind of knew I was gay, but I didn't know what gay meant," Cardillo said. "I just knew it was bad, and I knew it was something I could hide by giving my life to God."

During his senior year at Iona Prep, he finally told someone what had happened to him. A brother approached him after a rehearsal for a school play, asking if he made a final decision on whether or not to join the Christian Brothers.

Cardillo started weeping.

He said the brother asked him two questions: Who was it, and where did it happen.

After he told that brother, he had to take his claims to the head Congregation of Christian Brothers' Eastern American Province Brother, Harold Michael Delaney. Delaney was also the principal at Iona Prep during the time Cardillo's alleged abuse took place.

Cardillo also needed to bring his application to join the brothers to that meeting.

Cardillo said he told Delaney what Ferro did to him. He believed it would prevent him from becoming a brother. He wept again in Delaney's office.

Then Delaney made him a strange offer. Cardillo said Delaney offered to let Cardillo him join the brothers as long as he never told anyone about the Rochester incident

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## A culture of silence and public secrets

Ferro's students at Iona Prep gave him a nickname. Other Christian Brothers called him "Sally Ann" Ferro, Cardillo said.

Cardillo claims that ignoring, hiding and keeping secrets about Ferro and other alleged sexual abusers within the brothers was the norm. He said a common practice entailed shifting brothers from one school to another after the abuse claims arose.

"There was always a culture of covering-up," Cardillo said.

As part of a bankruptcy settlement in 2012, the Christian Brothers provided a list of members who had more than one abuse claim against them. Cardillo knew and even lived with some of them, and while he said he had no idea some of them were accused of abuse, he still knew about Ferro.

Cardillo, in part, blames himself for some of the later alleged abuses that occurred in other Christian Brother's schools at the hands of Ferro.

"I might have been complicit in not being able to help those kids from other schools when he was transferred from Iona Prep," Cardillo said. "I could have warned them, to be careful of this guy."

The Irish Christian Brothers were founded in 1802 with the purpose of evangelizing and educating young people. In addition to Iona Prep and Blessed Sacrament, the Brothers — who were headquartered in New York — have schools in New York and New Jersey as well as throughout the country.

Some other Christian Brothers schools include:

- Power Memorial Academy (New York, New York)
- Cardinal Hayes High School (Bronx, New York)
- Bishop Kearney High School (Rochester, New York)
- Sacred Heart Grammar School (New York, New York)
- Notre Dame/Bishop Gibbons High School (Albany, New York)
- Essex Catholic High School (Newark, New Jersey)
- Bergen Catholic High School (Oradell, New Jersey)
- Cantwell High School (Los Angeles, California)
- Palma High School (Salinas, California)

## Coming out

By 1990, Cardillo decided to end the secrets. He left the order and came out as a gay man, after 14 years of service.

Cardillo kept the promise while he was part of the order.

After that, Cardillo spent time teaching language classes in Peru. In 2011 he joined over 430 others in a bankruptcy case against the Christian Brothers. Cardillo received some settlement money; he said he gave the money away.

The Chapter 11 suit, which allowed the school to negotiate with creditors without having to liquidate its assets, created a \$16.5 million trust that distributed funds to abuse victims.

Part of that suit left many questions about the numerous allegations leveled against the Brothers. As part of the settlement, none of the claims of sexual abuse would get investigated.

Now Cardillo's attorneys will use New York's Child Victims Act to get some closure. He's barred from suing the Christian Brothers under the 2011 bankruptcy agreement, but Cardillo's lawyers think he may still sue the school.

On Feb. 14, Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed the Child Victims Act, which extended by five years — to age 28 from 23 — New York's statute of limitations that allows victims of felony child sexual abuse to file civil lawsuits. It also provided a one-year, one-time-only period to seek civil action, regardless of how long ago the abuse occurred.

The act included a caveat that instituted a six-month hold after the act was signed before anyone could file a suit under the new law.

When it expires in August, Cardillo's lawyers will begin filing in the hope of getting to the bottom of some of the claims from the bankruptcy suit.

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nstitutions and take depositions to find out who knew what and when at each,"

Back in 2011, Amala's firm represented nearly 100 people who filed claims against the Christian Brothers when it filed for bankruptcy.

In 2017 the Irish Christian Brothers released a list of members who had more than one abuse claim against them. Claims against these men were never validated, as part of the bankruptcy settlement agreement.

- Angel, Larry K. (deceased)
- Barry, Gerald K. (former)
- Beckstrom, Robert E. (former)
- Brouillette, Robert (former)
- Burton, David B. (Brother)
- Carr, Michael T. (deceased)
- Carroll, Francis (deceased)
- Casale, Albert (former)
- Chaney, John (Brother)
- Cobb, Alan S. (former)
- Collins, Donald Cecil (deceased)
- Condon, Eugene (former)
- Courtney, Edward (former)
- Delamere, Frank P. (former)
- Duffin, Thomas (deceased)
- Dunn, James Claver (deceased)
- Ferro, Salvatore (Brother)
- Ford, Thomas C. (deceased)
- French, Edward George (Brother)
- Gardner, Stephen Justin (former)
- Hanney, James (former)
- Heathwood, John (deceased)
- Heustis, Jerome (deceased)
- Hewitt, Andrew Thomas (deceased)
- Houlihan, James Alvarez (deceased)
- Irwin, Charles (deceased)
- Kealey, John (deceased)
- Kernan, Joseph (deceased)
- Lasik, Ronald (Brother)
- Lawlor, John (former)
- Medvit, Paul (deceased)
- Murphy, Clement Adan (deceased)
- Murphy, John E. (former)
- Murphy, Thomas Ignatius (deceased)
- Nash, Dermot (deceased)
- Neary, Walter D. (deceased)
- O'Connor, John J. (former)
- Padilla, Ruben Mark (former)
- Post, Robert (former)
- Ralph, Alan Gerard (Brother)
- Reycraft, Paul S. (former)
- Ryan, Daniel Peter (deceased)
- Satterthwaite, Robert (deceased)
- Stoyles, Michael E. (deceased)
- Thompson, James (former)
- Thorne, Harold (Brother)
- Walderman, J. Matthew (Brother)
- Walsh, Michael (deceased)
- Warren, James V. (deceased)



- [Here's the list of Catholic priests accused of abuse in NJ \(https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2019/02/13/nj-list-of-priests-accused-of-abuse-by-diocese/2848547002/?utm\\_source=oembed&utm\\_medium=onsite&utm\\_campaign=storylines&utm\\_content=news&utm\\_term=2994167002\)](https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/2019/02/13/nj-list-of-priests-accused-of-abuse-by-diocese/2848547002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=2994167002)
- [Pope vows to 'spare no effort' in confronting sex abusers \(https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/02/24/ending-clergy-abuse-pope-vows-confront-clergy-sex-abusers/2971248002/?utm\\_source=oembed&utm\\_medium=onsite&utm\\_campaign=storylines&utm\\_content=news&utm\\_term=2994167002\)](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2019/02/24/ending-clergy-abuse-pope-vows-confront-clergy-sex-abusers/2971248002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=2994167002)
- [New list of abusive priests identifies seven former McQuaid staffers \(https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2019/01/15/priest-abuse-cornelius-carr-roy-drake-mcquaid-jesuit-rochester-ny-thomas-denny-riforgiato-voelkle/2536737002/?utm\\_source=oembed&utm\\_medium=onsite&utm\\_campaign=storylines&utm\\_content=news&utm\\_term=2994167002\)](https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2019/01/15/priest-abuse-cornelius-carr-roy-drake-mcquaid-jesuit-rochester-ny-thomas-denny-riforgiato-voelkle/2536737002/?utm_source=oembed&utm_medium=onsite&utm_campaign=storylines&utm_content=news&utm_term=2994167002)

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