

II. Pastors, Priests and their Parishes Priests as Perpetrators; A Diocesan Breach of Trust

Priest A

It was music that brought together *Priest A* and his first victim. As an altar server, music minister and member of the parish folk group, this young boy spent more time at his church than almost anywhere else. This also meant that he spent more time with *Priest A* than with anyone else. So when, as a 13-year-old, his mother discovered that he was homosexual, it was natural that she would turn to *Priest A* for advice. As the victim explained to the Grand Jury, “In eighth grade my mother found out I was gay, she insisted I speak with (*Priest A*) to have him make me not gay” This conversation would have devastating consequences.

To the initial surprise of the victim, when he disclosed to *Priest A* that he was gay, *Priest A* confided that he too was dealing with the same issues and suggested that “maybe they could help each other”. The victim readily agreed. *Priest A* told him they should keep their conversation between the two of them. It seemed like the logical thing to do. Thereafter, whenever they were together the conversation centered on sex. Not only did these conversations take place at church, but when they did things together outside of the parish. This included going to the movies, taking ski trips out of state and going into Manhattan for concerts and Broadway shows.

After one trip to Lincoln Center, when the victim was around the age of 14, *Priest A* took him downtown to the West Village. They went to a gay club called the Limelight. Ironically this club was located in an old church. The club was a warren of rooms that *Priest A* seemed to know his way around. The pair found themselves in a back room, where adult men were engaging in a variety of sexual acts. As the victim candidly explained to the Grand Jury he was both terrified

and excited at what he saw. He felt that *Priest A* had brought him to the club so that he could experience for himself what they had only previously discussed privately. *Priest A* quickly went off with other men and began engaging in sexual activity with them. The victim found himself surrounded by strangers who were undressing and touching him. *Priest A* noticed this and took him out of the room.

After a drink at the bar, they returned to this same room. This time, *Priest A* stood by watching while his young friend engaged in sex with the men in the room. At one point, *Priest A* pushed the men aside and began to touch him. This made the boy very angry and confused. The victim's confusion only deepened as *Priest A* begged him for sex. The victim refused, and they left.

Priest A returned the boy home at 6:00 in the morning. To the victim's astonishment, his mother asked no questions about the time, even though it was a school day. As an adult, the victim explained what happened to the Grand Jury like this:

My mother who had complete faith that this man would help me out, the woman who is a devout Catholic, complete blind faith in the collar, I walk in at six o'clock in the morning. Didn't bat an eyelash...It was that kind of trust that he had that made him bring me home at six o'clock in the morning on a school night and I didn't go to school that day because I was out drinking and at a sex club all night".

Unfortunately, the victim's refusal to engage in sexual activity at the club did not discourage *Priest A*. Once, when they were driving together, *Priest A* grabbed for the victim's penis and then pulled the car over. He tried to kiss the victim who stopped him. They were en route to a ski area out of state. For the remainder of the trip, *Priest A* bothered the boy about sex. At every opportunity he touched him, suggested intimate behavior and sat on the edge of his bed at night.

Sometime when the victim was in 9th grade *Priest A* was transferred to another parish. Their friendship continued. The pair spent almost every weekend in each other's company with the boy sleeping at *Priest A's* new parish rectory on Saturday evenings.

The summer after the boy's sophomore year in high school, they were away together on vacation with some visiting priests. At one point, when the other priests were out on an errand, *Priest A* confided in the boy, who was now 15, that he wanted to engage in oral sex. After years of pressure, the boy finally relented. After this incident the victim began to limit his contact with *Priest A* because he was furious with him.

Shortly before *Priest A's* transfer from the parish where he had met his victim, a controversy broke out over their relationship. The genesis of the controversy was, that on a parish retreat, the boy had confided in a lay employee that he felt overwhelmed and confused by *Priest A's* attention.⁹ The boy also explained that he was very confused about his sexual orientation and *Priest A's* behaviors were adding to his nervousness and discomfort.

The boy began to cry and told his confidant that he did not want to spend time with *Priest A* but that his mother insisted. He explained that *Priest A* was in charge of every decision in his life including what courses he was taking in school and how he spent his time. Although the boy never indicated that there was sexual contact between the two of them, he was deeply depressed and suicidal. Based on what she was hearing and observing the woman, who

⁹ This employee had previously noticed that the relationship between *Priest A* and the boy seemed especially close and, in her mind, inappropriate. She was aware that the two went places outside of the parish alone and that *Priest A* had purchased the boy a bicycle so they could ride together in the afternoon.

was training as a psychologist, was very concerned that *Priest A* was sexually abusing the boy.

Later that evening the woman observed the boy leaving confession in tears. Although she did not ask him what had happened in the confessional, she told him that she would call his family on Monday morning with the name of someone who could help him with his problems. As promised, she called the boy's home first thing the following Monday morning. His mother answered and angrily told the woman that *Priest A* had instructed that she tell her to have nothing further to do with her son. Although she respected the mother's wishes, the woman's anxiety increased as she observed that the boy spent every weekend with *Priest A* in his new parish assignment, staying overnight in the rectory. When the pair went away together for an extended summer vacation the woman decided she needed to do something to protect this child.

Initially she decided to speak with two women she knew from her professional affiliation with the Diocese. They gave her the name of a priest in the Diocese that was involved in cases where priests were accused of inappropriate sexual conduct with children. She contacted this priest and met with him twice. The first was a brief meeting in the Chancery. The second was a lengthy conversation at the priest's residence. The woman explained all that she had observed and explicitly related her concerns about *Priest A* and the young boy. While she did not relate any instances of sexual abuse between the two, as she had neither been told of nor observed any such behavior, she did make it clear that she suspected that some sort of sexual abuse was ongoing.

The woman, who as previously noted was studying psychology, and the priest, discussed at length the nuances of a sexually abusive relationship, authoritative books on the subject and the availability of treatment facilities for sexually abusive clergy. She felt that the priest was sympathetic and shared her concerns. He appeared to be especially frustrated at the information

she related that the boy and *Priest A* had been spending time alone outside of the parish. He explained that all priests had recently attended a clergy conference where speakers at the highest levels of Diocesan administration had specifically condemned this type of behavior.

When the woman inquired about what action would be taken by the Diocese in this situation, she was told by the priest that *Priest A* would be sent to a treatment facility for sexually abusive clergy. When she asked what the Diocese would do about the boy, the priest explained, “It’s not my responsibility to worry about the boy. My job is to protect the Bishop and the church.” Given the nature of their previous conversation the woman was taken aback by this comment. The meeting concluded shortly thereafter.

At no time after this meeting did the woman ever become aware that *Priest A* was sent for treatment. As time passed, she became increasingly frustrated, as numerous telephone calls to the priest with whom she had met went unanswered. In fact, after their second meeting, they never had another conversation. This led her to write a letter to Diocesan officials complaining that her efforts to insure the safety of this young child had been ignored. (Grand Jury Exhibit 133). This letter, complete with six pages of observations, summaries and concerns about her dealings with *Priest A*, the boy, his family and diocesan representatives resulted in a form response directing her to the priest she had previously met with and who was now ignoring her. (Grand Jury Exhibit 134). She began to realize that she was trapped in a vicious cycle. Meanwhile, the parents of the boy had retained an attorney, who threatened to sue her if she pursued the issue. The parish was in turmoil, and the relationship between *Priest A* and the boy continued. She resigned her position with the parish and moved on to another job in the Diocese. She had no contact with anyone in the boy’s family again until April of 2002 when his mother

called her to apologize and to explain that her son had told her everything about his relationship with *Priest A* on his 21st birthday.

The victim told the Grand Jury that, at the time, he felt incredibly guilty about the controversy all of this generated in the parish, especially because he knew that everything he was made to deny was true. The adults in his life had him so convinced that the woman who had complained to the Diocese was trying to ruin his life, that he could not speak up for himself. When he accompanied his mother to Rockville Centre to speak with a Diocesan official¹⁰ about the matter, *Priest A's* name was never even mentioned. They only discussed the question of sleep deprivation on retreats, as if that were the cause of his distress. His mother met with this priest alone for about ten minutes. She later told her son that she had explained away the controversy as a vicious rumor

After *Priest A's* transfer to another parish and after complaints about him had been made to the Diocese, he abused a second boy who was a friend of his first victim. The two had developed a friendship that involved concerts and shows in Manhattan. On one occasion while they were at the movies, *Priest A* placed his hand over the boy's penis and began to move it up and down. In the car, on their way back to the rectory, *Priest A*, continued fondling the boy. Once they arrived at the rectory, *Priest A* began kissing the boy on his face and neck. He undid his shorts, pulled them down and put his mouth on the boy's penis. After a while, the pair went into *Priest A's* bedroom. They undressed and *Priest A* lay down on top of the boy. After *Priest A* ejaculated, he rolled off the boy and pointed to the crucifix over his bed saying out loud, "I'll talk to you later."

¹⁰ This was the same priest that the parish employee had met with at his residence.

About six months later, the boys confided in each other their experiences with *Priest A*. By this time the second victim had his junior driver's license. He drove to the rectory and angrily confronted *Priest A*. He wanted *Priest A* to acknowledge that he was wrong and to agree that he should leave the priesthood. *Priest A* told him he was seeing a psychiatrist, but that he still was inclined to repeat his abusive behaviors. Bewildered, the boy left. He did not see *Priest A* again until he officiated at a family wedding. At that time, they again spoke about *Priest A* leaving the priesthood.