

Long Island Voice of the Faithful

As we begin our seventh year of "vigiling" every first Sunday of the month at St. Agnes Cathedral, we thank you, the parishioners of St. Agnes parish. Some of you have welcomed us, some wish we would simply go away, and others wonder why we're still here.

We're here because the clergy abuse crisis, contrary to what U. S. bishops would have you believe, is not over:

From the Chicago Sun-Times, July 30, 2010:

Lawsuit: Church kept priest after sex abuse allegations

BY LISA DONOVAN Staff Reporter

A 19-year-old man filed a lawsuit today against the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, alleging church officials moved pedophile priest Daniel McCormack from assignment to assignment even after sex abuse allegations surfaced against the now defrocked pastor.

The man, identified in court papers only as John E. Doe, alleges he was abused by McCormack as a 6th grader at St. Agatha's parish rectory on the West Side from 2001 to 2002.

"McCormack, as part of a continuing series of acts, raped, inappropriately sexually touched, rubbed and/or abused the [plaintiff over eighty ... times, including placing the [plaintiff's hand on McCormack's penis more than sixty ... times for penile stimulation," the suit alleges.

The suit accuses the archdiocese and Cardinal Francis George of negligence for allegedly moving him from the seminary to two parish assignments, even though McCormack had been accused of sexual abuse.

It also accuses the church of failing to maintain records of alleged reported sexual abuse of minors involving McCormack when he was a student or seminarian. McCormack was a student at Niles College of Loyola University from 1986 to 1990 and attended Mundelein Seminary from 1990 to 1994.

"The notes, reports and records of McCormack's reported sexual abuses of minors as a student and/or seminarian, including those within McCormack's Archdiocesan personnel file are lost or destroyed," the suit states.

The 19-year-old is seeking at least \$50,000 in damages.

A spokesperson for the archdiocese declined to comment on the lawsuit.

McCormack, 41, was sentenced to five years in prison after pleading guilty in 2007 to charges he fondled five boys. It was unclear from court papers whether the boy in this case was among the victims in the criminal case. McCormack remains behind bars.

As long as the crisis continues, our public presence will continue. As long as U. S. bishops continue the cover-up, we'll be here. Until U. S. Bishops disclose the whereabouts of every credibly accused abuser, until they open the church's secret files and records on abusers, until they accept responsibility for hiding abusers and moving them from parish to parish, until they stop spending our money to fight unjust laws regarding reporting of childhood sexual abuse, we're not going away.

What New York owes victims of sex abuse: The Pope's regret is not enough to protect children

By Marge Markey and Marci Hamilton

New York Daily News, Tuesday, April 20th, 2010

The Pope, on his first international trip since the scandal over his alleged complicity in priest-abuse scandals began dominating headlines, is meeting with victims and expressing "shame and sorrow" about their plight. His statements are welcome - but, with all due respect, they don't mean much to the many victims of priest sex abuse who have yet to experience anything approaching justice. Victims of these heinous crimes, including many right here in New York, have suffered for years in silence.

The childhood sexual abuse scandal is epidemic, with Germany, Brazil, Britain, the Netherlands and Norway being added to the already lengthy list of countries where there is evidence of such abuse by clergy. Since the Vatican's responses continue to lag well behind the world's demands for accountability, it is up to governments to take action. Already in Germany, Chancellor Angela Merkel launched an in-depth investigation into the abuse of her country's children.

The U.S. is uniquely positioned to take more aggressive steps. One promising path: amending the RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) laws to include institutionally facilitated child sex abuse. These laws could then be used against any organization, religious or otherwise, that has knowingly allowed children to come into harm.

But more importantly and more immediately, states should reform their statutes of limitations for child sex abuse so that arbitrary time barriers no longer keep child predators in business and victims from pursuing justice in the courtroom. It is estimated that one in four girls and one in five boys are sexually abused - a stunning number. Yet only 10% of victims ever go to authorities. It is also fact that survivors typically need decades to come forward and the legal system offers the only viable means of identifying child predators who are operating under the radar against our children.

Lengthening or even eliminating statutes of limitation is a costless way for the states to do right by victims. Alaska, Maine and Delaware simply got rid of their time requirements. In California, lengthening the statute of limitations yielded the identities of more than 300 previously secret predators.

New York has yet to act - and it must correct this oversight now. The Child Victims Act would extend statutes of limitation for childhood sex abuse by five years, so that victims will not have to file charges before they are 23 or civil claims before they are 28. The bill also sets an age cap on victims, so those older than 58 will not be able to bring a claim.

Even more important, the bill would create a brand-new window of opportunity of one year for victims who previously have had their statutes of limitations expire, enabling them to file claims in court against those who caused their abuse. That's an approach that has worked in other states - in exposing not just abusers in the priesthood, but perpetrators in other religions and nonreligious groups as well.

Since the coverup of the Catholic Church's secret handling of child sexual abuse by its priests first broke eight years ago, thousands of victims here in New York and across the U.S. have demanded accountability. Before yet another year passes without justice, our state needs to stand up for child abuse victims. Silence and inaction are simply not an option.

Markey, a Democratic assemblywoman from Queens, is the founding sponsor of the New York State Child Victims Act. Hamilton is a professor at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law of Yeshiva University and the author of "Justice Denied: What America Must Do to Protect Its Children."