

Father George R. Pierce

Biographical Information

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| YEAR OF BIRTH: | 1933 |
| YEAR OF DEATH: | 2009 |
| ORDINATION: | May 23, 1959 |

Employment/Assignment History

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| 6/23/1959 – 12/8/1960 | St. Mary, Freeport, PA |
| 12/9/1960 – 2/13/1963 | All Saints, Masontown, PA |
| 2/14/1963 – 6/12/1966 | Immaculate Conception, Connellsville, PA |
| 6/13/1966 – 6/19/1967 | St. Mary and Holy Trinity, Ford City, PA |
| 6/20/1967 – 6/24/1968 | Immaculate Conception, Irwin, PA |
| 6/25/1968 – 6/7/1972 | St. Gertrude, McIntyre and its mission St. Anthony, Aultman, PA |
| 6/7/1972 – 6/4/1985 | Holy Family, Seward and its missions: St. Mary, Bolivar and St. Mary, Florence, PA |
| 6/4/1985 – 6/20/1995 | Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Leckrone, PA |
| 6/20/1995 – 5/14/1997 | St. James, Maxwell, PA |
| 5/14/1997 | Leave of Absence |
| 8/1998 | Retired |

Summary

In 1997, the Diocese of Greensburg received an allegation of sexual abuse against Father George Pierce. The victim claimed that the abuse began in 1968 when she was 12 years old and continued until she was approximately age 20. She explained that had worked for Pierce, cleaning the St. Gertrude rectory. According to the victim, a normal evening with Pierce included dinner and alcoholic drinks followed by sexual intercourse in the rectory. She continued to visit Pierce even after he was transferred to Holy Family and its missions in 1972.

The victim felt that she had a legitimate romantic relationship with Pierce and became jealous of another female from Jeannette with whom Pierce also had a sexual relationship (it is unclear if the other female was a minor or an adult). According to the typed Diocesan notes from a meeting with the victim on April 28, 1997, "*he [Pierce] picked me up and we took her home to Jeannette. On the way home he had her perform oral sex on him in the car. I [Victim #1] was 15 or 16.*"¹⁰

¹⁰ It is somewhat unclear who the "her" is in the notes. Handwritten notes indicate that the "her" is Victim #1 by stating, "*he [Pierce] picked me up and we took her home to Jeannette. On the way home, he had me perform oral sex on him in the car.*" However, the typed version of the notes changed "me" to "her," which would indicate that the other female performed oral sex on Pierce.

Summary

Pierce's Diocesan file reveals that Bishop William Connare knew about inappropriate behavior between Pierce and a young woman in his parish as early as 1972. Connare instructed Pierce not to hire "a teenage woman from his former parish as housekeeper." Connare received several complaints from parishioners about young women staying overnight at the parish. While Connare sent Pierce several letters of warning, he took no further action on the matter. According to the files, parishioners from every parish (except St. James) complained to the Diocese about Pierce's relationship with a "particular female" (understood to be the victim described above).

Pierce acknowledged having an inappropriate relationship with the victim, but denied having sexual intercourse with her. Rather, he contended they only engaged in mutual masturbation. Pierce further stated he was in love with the victim and also claimed that "*after [the victim], he 'white knuckled' it.*"

Following the report of the allegation, Pierce received therapy and an evaluation from November 1997 to May 1998 through the Anodos Center. He soon thereafter retired from the priesthood in August of 1998. Upon his retirement, he was not permitted to function as a priest.

A handwritten note in the file by an unknown author referenced a conference call with Pierce dated April 20, 1998. It stated, "*Contact Erie and ask what their mind is about his helping out there. Invite them into dialogue with us.*" The Grand Jury understands that the Diocese of Erie had been known to accept and assist priests living in their Diocese who previously had sexual misconduct allegations made against them. After retiring, Pierce moved to Linesville which is within the Diocese of Erie. According to Pierce's Diocesan file, the Diocese of Erie received no allegations of misconduct against Pierce while he lived there.

The victim filed a civil suit against the Diocese of Greensburg in 1997. The case was settled for \$30,000. The settlement include strict confidentiality terms which barred the victim from discussing its terms or publicizing the facts of the settlement through any media form.

In 2002, the Diocese of Greensburg received an allegation from a second victim who claimed that Pierce sexually abused him for three years during Pierce's assignment at St. Anthony and St. Gertrude. Pierce was assigned to this parish from June of 1968 to June of 1972. According to the victim, when he was approximately 10 years of age, he confided in Pierce that he was "gang raped" by his older brother and his friends shortly before his seventh birthday. Pierce reportedly told the victim he had to provide oral and anal sex to him in order to be saved and go to heaven. Feeling Pierce could be trusted due to his position and authority within the church, the victim engaged in anal and oral sex with Pierce for three years beginning in 1969 until 1972, when Pierce was transferred to Holy Family and its missions.

In a letter dated August 28, 2003, Father Roger Statnick offered the victim counseling and assured him that Pierce had undergone a psychological evaluation, had retired from active ministry, and was banned from any public functioning as a priest.

Summary

On November 18, 2004, ██████████ requested that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) dismiss Pierce from the clerical state due to the sexual abuse allegations against him. The letter indicated a judicial process to assess Pierce's guilt would be unnecessary because he had admitted to committing the allegations in question. Additionally, ██████████ request included a representation that the first victim had agreed not to publicize the abuse she suffered at the hands of Pierce.

Pierce died in 2009.