

Fr. L

396. *Fr. L* was ordained in 1978, served in a parish shortly thereafter, and then transferred to a Florida diocese in 1983.³⁴ Documents in *Fr. L*'s file show that, while in Florida, he voluntarily left the priesthood for about sixteen years, from 1986 to 2002. When he returned to ministry in Florida, two sexual abuse complaints were made against him. The complaints involved Buffalo minors or concerned his conduct at the time he served as a priest in the Buffalo Diocese. After *Fr. L*'s resignation in 2003, the Diocesan Corporation received an additional complaint related to his conduct during his tenure in the Buffalo Diocese. Instead of applying the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms*, the Diocesan Corporation failed to sufficiently conduct internal investigations into allegations that *Fr. L* had sexually abused minors; failed to seek the DRB's assessment of sexual abuse allegations against *Fr. L*; and failed to refer *Fr. L* to the CDF. Further, the Diocesan Corporation engaged in other improper conduct by failing to reasonably

³⁴ Unless otherwise noted, the allegations against *Fr. L* are based exclusively on documents that were obtained from public sources or produced from diocesan files for Attorney General review. The allegations against *Fr. L* have not been independently investigated by the Attorney General and are recited only to establish the information provided to, and decisions taken by, the Diocesan Corporation in connection with its response to reports of alleged sexual abuse.

monitor *Fr. L*, exposing itself and minors to unnecessary risks.

Pre-2002 Concerns

397. In May 1983, *Fr. L* asked Bishop Head for permission to transfer to the Diocese of St. Petersburg, Florida, to be closer to his family. Head granted this request, and in November 1983, *Fr. L* transferred to a parish in Florida.

398. In December 1985, *Fr. L* informed Bishop Head that he had left his Florida assignment because the St. Petersburg Diocese had made him “angry and bitter.” *Fr. L* thus asked Head for a one-year leave of absence to “evaluate what [he] should do [and to sort out his] many conflicting feelings.” *Fr. L* later explained to Head that he needed the leave, in part, because of disagreements he had with Church doctrine. Head never formally granted *Fr. L*’s request for a leave.

399. According to the St. Petersburg Diocese, for the next sixteen years *Fr. L* left ministry and worked for a state agency dedicated to child services.

Defendants’ Violations of Sexual Abuse Policies and Secular Fiduciary Duties

400. In early 2002, *Fr. L* approached the St. Petersburg Diocese about resuming his ministry. On information and belief, *Fr. L* remained incardinated in the Buffalo Diocese, which meant that the Buffalo Diocese retained authority over his clerical status. Bishop Robert N. Lynch of the St. Petersburg Diocese sent Bishop Mansell a letter in March 2002, seeking Mansell’s consent to *Fr. L*’s return to ministry. Mansell did not object.

401. In April 2002, the St. Petersburg Diocese assigned *Fr. L* to a Florida parish.

402. In June 2003, Complainant 1 filed a complaint with the St. Petersburg Diocese, alleging that in 1983, when he was thirteen years old and a Buffalo resident, *Fr. L* had returned to Buffalo and traveled with Complainant 1 and Complainant 1’s brother to Florida for a

vacation. Complainant 1 later told investigators from the St. Petersburg Diocese that *Fr. L* had taken him and his brother to tourist attractions and that at night, *Fr. L* had shared a bed with Complainant 1. Complainant 1 also told investigators that on the last day of the trip, he told *Fr. L* he did not want to leave. In response, *Fr. L* allegedly hugged Complainant 1, removed his underwear, and performed oral sex on the boy.

403. In July 2003, the St. Petersburg Diocese notified the Diocesan Corporation of Complainant 1's claim. The Diocesan Corporation was also advised that *Fr. L* had denied the allegations. The Diocesan Corporation failed to sufficiently investigate Complainant 1's allegations pursuant to the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms*.

404. In August 2003, the St. Petersburg Diocese notified Bishop Mansell that it would place *Fr. L* on voluntary leave until the case was resolved.

405. Complainant 1's legal claims against the St. Petersburg Diocese, the Diocesan Corporation, and *Fr. L* were settled and included a monetary contribution from the Diocesan Corporation.

406. In October 2003, the Diocesan Corporation received another complaint of sexual abuse against *Fr. L*. Complainant 2 alleged, among other things, that in the late 1970s when he was about age thirteen, *Fr. L* engaged in oral sex with him. The Complainant also alleged that *Fr. L* had pushed him onto a bed in the rectory and touched and kissed him. *Fr. L*'s file does not contain any decrees opening or closing a diocesan investigation into Complainant 2's claims. The Diocesan Corporation failed to sufficiently investigate Complainant 2's allegations pursuant to the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms*.

407. On October 28, 2003, *Fr. L* resigned from the St. Petersburg Diocese. In a letter accepting his resignation and copying Bishop Mansell, Bishop Lynch told *Fr. L* that due to his

resignation, his priestly faculties were revoked, and he was prohibited from publicly holding himself out as a priest or celebrating Mass.

408. In November 2003, the Diocesan Corporation received an anonymous complaint against *Fr. L*. The complaint alleges that in the late 1970s, when the complainant was in the eighth grade, *Fr. L* and another priest took him to a cabin and attempted to persuade the boy to walk, swim, and eat in the nude. The Diocesan Corporation failed to conduct a sufficient, independent investigation of this allegation pursuant to the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms*.

409. Among other things, the absence of documentation indicating that the Diocesan Corporation regularly supervised *Fr. L* shows that the Diocesan Corporation failed to reasonably monitor him.

410. In March 2018, the Diocesan Corporation publicly identified *Fr. L* on a list of “diocesan priests who were removed from ministry, were retired, or left ministry after allegations of sexual abuse of a minor.”

411. A year later, in a March 2019 letter, counsel for the Diocesan Corporation advised the Attorney General that it had begun the process of referring *Fr. L* to the CDF.

412. In about September 2019, the Diocesan Corporation, in a disclosure on its website, publicized additional information about *Fr. L* and other priests identified in its March 2018 list. The information identifies various priests who would be referred to the CDF. *Fr. L* is not identified as a priest the Diocesan Corporation intends to refer to the CDF.

413. The Diocesan Corporation repeatedly violated the *Charter* and the *Essential Norms* by failing to sufficiently conduct internal investigations into allegations that *Fr. L* had sexually abused minors; failing to seek the DRB’s assessment of sexual abuse allegations against *Fr. L*; and failing to refer *Fr. L* to the CDF. The Diocesan Corporation also failed to reasonably

monitor *Fr. L.* The Diocesan Corporation's actions concealed *Fr. L.*'s conduct from the public and placed its beneficiaries at risk.