

NAME: Monsignor Harold J. Burkhardt
DATE OF BIRTH: March 3, 1922
DATE OF DEATH: March 18, 2000
ORDINATION: June 1, 1947

ASSIGNMENTS:

1947-08/1971	Pontifical College Josephinum, OH
09/1971-05/1973	Holy Name Church, Ebensburg, PA
05/1973-06/1988	St. Mary Immaculate Conception, Altoona, PA
06/1988	Resigned due to poor health
04/1989	Retired

While pastoring at St. Mary Immaculate Conception Church in Altoona, Pennsylvania, Father Harold Burkhardt perpetrated sexual child abuse on a 9-year-old boy. As an adult, the victim recalled being fondled through his clothes and being forced to suck Burkhardt's penis. On subsequent occurrences Burkhardt would pull down the victim's pants and insert a finger into his anus. Burkhardt asked the child a question, "What do you think God would say?" The victim didn't respond. Burkhardt filled the silence stating "God approved."

In 2005 this individual came forward and reported his victimization to the Diocese. The victim reported struggling with his psychological effects of his victimization, and was concerned that people would think he was "gay" or know he was "abused." The victim stated he denied being an abuse victim for years and even struggled with thinking that Burkhardt stopped abusing him because he stopped liking him.

The Grand Jury notes the absurdity of the so-called investigation into this matter. Bishop Adamec, the Diocese, and the Allegation Review Board responded to this report by hiring private detectives to investigate the victim. They sought the victim's school records. They interviewed Father William Rosensteel to obtain an opinion about the victim and his family. Rosensteel noted that the family didn't attend church often and that he couldn't imagine Monsignor Harold Burkhardt doing "anything like the allegation." Finally, they looked at Burkhardt's personnel file to see if there was any indication which would "support the allegation."

Though Burkhardt was dead at the time of the report, his alleged actions were clearly criminal. Rather than expose the conduct and embolden the silent victims of

abuse the Diocese chose to remain silent itself. The Grand Jury found, as was the case in most sexual child abuse reports involving priests in the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, Diocese officials did not report the matter to the police. Instead, the church engaged in secrecy and an assessment of civil liability. The investigation of the victim and the reliance on the opinion of another priest, one who was a child predator himself, is galling and offensive to reason. However, from 1940 to 2011 such conduct on the part of Diocesan officials occurred regularly.