

## B. The Luddy Scandal

Public scrutiny has fallen upon the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown before. The Diocese found itself at the center of a child abuse scandal in the 1990's involving Diocesan Priest Francis Luddy. The press coverage of litigation surrounding allegations that Father Francis Luddy had molested children within the Diocese was relatively thorough. This coverage lasted past the trial and continued to appear in local papers into the 2000's. While there are many examples of press coverage of this very public ordeal, the following example by Susan Evans of the Tribune-Democrat, February 24, 2003, is representative of the type of investigative journalism that uncovered many alarming details buried within the Luddy litigation. Evans wrote in part:

*"A conspiracy of silence has deep roots in the Altoona-Johnstown Roman Catholic Diocese, and in church law itself, where "secret archives" are used to hide scandalous information, such as sex abuse by priests. And until recently, the conspiracy of silence often was aided and abetted by police and judges, who wanted the diocese to handle its problems internally. Locally, a mid-1990s lawsuit against the diocese and since-defrocked Francis Luddy, accused of sexually abusing young boys, saw the first cracks in the church's wall of silence. Nationally, the sex scandal that started in Boston and spread from coast to coast, has torn down that wall of silence. Now, everyone's talking, either in court or in the court of public opinion.*

*But in the eight-county Altoona-Johnstown diocese, during the past several decades, errant priests were kept secret from their parishioners, often with police and even a few judges helping out. Records gathered for the Luddy trial in 1994, and only being made public in light of the national scandal, along with publicity about church Roman canon law, tell the story. Documents have been withheld because they are believed to be protected under centuries-old religious doctrine, said the attorney who sued the diocese in the Luddy case. Priests accused of sexual misconduct have been counseled to "lay low" and have been tipped off to police surveillance, court records show. And in at least one case, a priest wasn't sent for psychiatric treatment because diocese officials feared it would be an admission of guilt, court records say."*

*In that February 24, 2003, article Evans interviewed Richard Serbin, Esq. Serbin, an Altoona attorney, has made a career of litigation allegations of child abuse within the Catholic Church. Serbin's website is entitled "[www.childsexabuseattorney.com](http://www.childsexabuseattorney.com)" and details his litigation in that area. In the aforementioned interview with Tribune-Democrat, Serbin discussed the "secret archives" of the Diocese which became central to the Luddy Litigation stating:*

*Canon law mandates "a secret archive" in each diocese, Serbin wrote. "Each year documents of criminal cases concerning moral matters are to be destroyed whenever the guilty parties have died, or 10 years have elapsed since a condemnatory sentence concluded the affair," Canon law says. Only the bishop is to have the key to the secret archive, says Canon 490. Serbin said documents also are often written in a sort of secret code. For example, the words 'sodomized, sexually molested and pedophilia' will not appear. Instead, you will probably see 'certain indiscretions, familiarities, complaints, etc.," [Serbin} wrote."*

While press accounts covered portions of the history of sexual child abuse, the Grand Jury was able to obtain a larger and clearer understanding of both the unpursued criminal activity and cover-up by members of the Diocese.

NAME: Fr. Francis E. Luddy  
DATE OF BIRTH: April 3, 1942  
STATUS: Dismissed from Priesthood  
ORDINATION: May 20, 1967

ASSIGNMENTS:

1967-1969 St. Mark's Church, Altoona, PA  
1969-1970 St. John Gualbert Cathedral, Johnstown, PA  
1970-1972 St. Patrick's Church, Johnstown, PA  
1972-1975 Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament, Altoona, PA  
1975-1980 St. Therese's Church, Altoona, PA  
1980-1987 St. Mary's Church, Windber, PA  
\*05/12/1987 Foundation House Servants of the Paraclete -Treatment Facility

Between 1969 and 1984 Francis Luddy molested, groped, masturbated, sodomized and performed oral sex on at least 10 children between the ages of 10 and 17. The crimes occurred throughout his entire ministry as a priest within the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown. It is not a stretch of the mind or reality to state that if Francis Luddy was having contact with children, they were in danger of becoming victims of child sexual abuse.

Perhaps no single priest is a better representation of the misguided direction of church leadership than the mishandling of the Father Francis Luddy matter. Faced with an onslaught of evidence that Luddy had raped the church's most vulnerable souls, church leadership chose to wrap themselves in lawyers and litigation rather than hold Francis Luddy accountable. The Grand Jury heard evidence of presbytery council members who discussed the need to settle the shameful matter of Luddy's conduct out of court without a trial. However, Bishop Adamec forcefully refused. Adamec rebutted concerns about Luddy by stating that the "bright lights" would be on the Diocese. But Adamec knew that Francis Luddy admitted to molesting as many as ten catholic children while serving as a priest.

Bishop Joseph Adamec was fully aware of Francis Luddy's sickening admission to having molested at least 10 children when Adamec and the Diocese disseminated a press release on August 5, 1992 excoriating a single allegation by an individual who had elected not to proceed with civil litigation. Bishop Joseph Adamec, the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, and their legal counsel misled catholic congregants and the public stating:

*“These defendants [Hogan, Adamec, the Diocese, etc.], as well as Father Luddy, have, from the commencement of this lawsuit, denied all of Mr. Hutchinson’s claims as being baseless and without merit, as well as claims asserted by Mr. Hutchinson’s brother, who has filed a similar action in the Court of Common Pleas of Blair County.”*

Make no mistake, the Bishop of the Diocese rushed to celebrate the dismissal of a single legal complaint alleging Francis Luddy had sexually molested a child, while knowing with certainty that Francis Luddy had admitted to molesting the very children to whom the Bishop bore the most responsibility. The Grand Jury notes that the chilling impact of such a victory lap on the victims of child abuse throughout the Diocese is incalculable.

The Grand Jury can find no evidence of a criminal prosecution of Francis Luddy other than records of a dismissed case in Somerset County. No criminal charges were filed in Blair County even though Luddy confessed to regularly molesting children during a high profile civil lawsuit in the 90’s. The absence of a law enforcement response to the high profile exposure of an enabled child predator is concerning. Records of the Diocese insurance providers note that a conclusion was made that local law enforcement lacked the intelligence and/or resources to likely pursue these types of matter.

It was also Luddy’s civil jury that found Bishop Hogan and the Diocese “knew that (Luddy) had a propensity for pedophilic behavior.” A 1.2 million dollar verdict was awarded. The conduct of Bishops James Hogan and Joseph Adamec was questioned throughout the Luddy litigation. Again, these findings were publically reported and yet unpursued.

When testifying before the Grand Jury on November 18, 2014, Monsignor Philip Saylor testified that under Bishop Hogan the threat to the children within the Diocese was so well known and institutionalized that there was both open discussion and procedure for the occurrence:

*Mr. Dye: So to be clear, there are two significant leaders of the lay community here. You've got a sheriff and a President Judge (Thomas Peoples), and they're coming to you saying you have to do something about these pedophile priests?*

*Mr. Saylor: Right.*

*Mr. Dye: And you would tell the Bishop?*

*Mr. Saylor: Right.*

*Mr. Dye: And based upon your earlier testimony, on occasion he would send them to a rehabilitation center in New Mexico?*

*Mr. Saylor: Right.*

*Mr. Dye: If they would come back and re-offend again, then he might suspend them?*

*Mr. Saylor: Yes.*

Many of Luddy's victims live daily with the weight of their tortured childhoods crushing their thoughts. By contrast, Luddy's enablers lived or died with the accolades of the faith and faithful they failed. Luddy is currently in poor health and residing in New Mexico.