

Reverend Francis T. Gillespie

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1931
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 7, 1959

Employment/Assignment History

5/1959 – 5/1963	St. Joseph's, Girardville, PA
5/1963 – 10/1965	Nativity HS, Pottsville, PA
6/1963 – 9/1963	St. Patrick's, Pottsville, PA (Asst. Pro Tem)
6/1965 – 3/1969	Notre Dame of Bethlehem, Bethlehem, PA
3/1966 – 5/1972	St. Jane Frances de Chantal, Easton, PA / Moravian College (student advisor)
5/1972 – 11/1974	Our lady of Mount Carmel, Minersville, PA
11/1974 – 9/1994	St. Joseph's, Girardville, PA
9/1994 – 11/1996	St. Margaret, Reading, PA
11/1996 – 12/2002	Annunciation of B.V.M., Catasauqua, PA
12/13/2002	Retired

Summary

In September 2002, a victim wrote a letter reporting sexual abuse by Father Francis T. Gillespie. The victim reported that, while he was an altar boy at about the age of ten at St. Joseph's in Girardville, Gillespie began grooming him for future abuse. Gillespie acted overly affectionately towards the victim and began hugging him in private. The victim wrote that he had been taught to "*respect and trust these religious figureheads.*" Gillespie then had the victim stay after Mass and help count the collection money. The victim's parents allowed it since they too trusted the clergy and believed Gillespie would be a good influence on the victim. During his time with Gillespie, Gillespie would ask the victim questions about lust and sex, and how much he weighed. The victim remembers Gillespie had a scale in his room and would weigh the victim. Gillespie would have the victim undress to his underwear and get on the scale. Even though he was a child at the time, the victim knew this behavior was strange and not right but thought Gillespie, a clergyman, could not have bad intentions. Gillespie then had the victim take off his underwear to get an "*exact weight.*" Gillespie then used a measuring tape to measure the victim around the waist and inseam. The victim remembers Gillespie putting his fingers and measuring tape against the victim's groin. At that point the victim froze and did not know what to do. He felt he could not say anything since Gillespie was a priest. Later, the victim heard other altar boys talking about Gillespie and his scale and measuring tape.

The victim reported that he stayed the night at Gillespie's residence on several occasions. Gillespie would have the victim dress in costumes and then take pictures of the victim. The victim would then undress from the costume into his clothes. The victim can still remember the

Summary

flash of a Polaroid camera going off as he changed. The victim reported that Gillespie would drink alcohol during the sleepovers.

The victim recalled an occasion when Gillespie gave him cold medication and in addition had him drink alcohol. The victim described this night as a “blackout” and “confusing.” The victim recalls waking up naked in bed with Gillespie, Gillespie had his arm around the victim. The victim felt Gillespie’s erect penis against his back. The victim recalls freezing at that point. Gillespie eventually allowed the victim to get out of bed and take a shower. As the victim was finishing up with his shower, Gillespie walked into the bathroom naked and tried to enter the shower with the victim. The victim quickly got out of the shower and tried to pretend that the entire abusive situation was normal. In three separate documents regarding the victim, all provided by the Diocese, the victim reported that Gillespie performed oral sex on him.

A known second victim, the older brother of the first victim, wrote a letter to the Diocese in 2003 describing abuse by Gillespie. The second victim wrote that he was an altar boy at St. Joseph’s in Girardville. When the second victim was about fourteen years old, Gillespie began grooming him in the same fashion as his brother, befriending him and having him help count the collection money. The second victim wrote, “My respect and admiration for this man was very great and I trusted him with my life; a mistake I would pay for the rest of my life.” The second victim reported that Gillespie would weigh and measure him in a room on the second floor of the rectory while he was naked. Gillespie also would have the second victim measure Gillespie while Gillespie was naked. The second victim said Gillespie would touch his genitals and buttocks during the weighing and measuring.

The second victim described the last time he went to the parish rectory to be measured and weighed by Gillespie. Gillespie came up behind the second victim while he stood naked on the scale and placed the second victim in a wrestling hold called a full nelson. While in the full nelson, the second victim’s arms were pinned back and controlled by Gillespie. The second victim was smaller than Gillespie and could not fight him off. The second victim reported that Gillespie then “rubbed his penis off my anus and sexually abused me. This sickened me to my stomach and never again would I return to St. Joseph’s Rectory.” The second victim was so ashamed of what had happened he could not tell his mother. Shortly after the incidents occurred in the 1980s, the second victim wrote a letter to the Diocese describing the abuse by Gillespie. The victim never received a response.

After reports of abuse in the Boston Diocese in 2002, the second victim told his wife that Gillespie had abused him. Prior to writing a letter to the Diocese in 2003, the second victim learned through his mother that Gillespie had abused his brother as well. The second victim wrote, “*It was his courage and bravery in coming forward that gave me the strength to write this letter.*”