

# Reverend Joseph H. Kean

## Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1937
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	March 7, 1964

## Employment/Assignment History

3/1964 – 8/1964	St. Joseph, Ashland, PA
8/1964 – 6/1965	St. Mary, St. Clair, PA
6/1965 – 11/1967	St. Paul, Allentown, PA
1/1967 – 8/1970	St. Paul, Reading, PA
8/1970 – 2/1971	Annunciation, Shenandoah, PA
2/1971 – 12/1973	Marian HS, Tamaqua, PA
2/1971 – 12/1973	Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Nesquehoning, PA
6/1973 – 6/1975	St.s Simon and Jude, Bethlehem, PA
6/1975 – 1/1977	St. Jane, Easton, PA
1/1977 – 1/1983	SS Peter and Paul, Tower City, PA
1/1983 – 9/1987	SS Peter and Paul, Lehighton, PA
9/1987 – 3/1993	St. Joseph, Ashland, PA
2/1/2002	Retired
6/26/2007	Dismissed from Priesthood

## Summary

On December 22, 1992, Reverend Francis J. Shuster wrote a letter to Bishop Thomas J. Welsh. Shuster related that he had been in contact with a parishioner who told him that her son was molested by Father Joseph H. Kean, then Pastor in Tower City. The sexual abuse was reported to have occurred when the victim was twelve years old and continued for several years. The mother of the victim told Shuster that her son had stayed the night with Kean in the rectory and had also spent a weekend with Kean once Kean was transferred to Lehighton. The mother of the victim also recalled Kean taking her son to Kean's parents' home to spend the night. The mother of the victim told Shuster she and her husband allowed these overnight stays to occur because they had "*absolute trust and confidence in Father.*"

On January 13, 1993, the mother of the victim personally informed the Chancellor of the sexual abuse of her son by Kean. The mother also reported that Kean had sexually abused a friend of her son's.

On February 23, 1993, Welsh and Monsignor Anthony Muntone met with Kean and informed him of the accusation brought by the victim. Kean admitted to Welsh and Muntone that he had abused the victim and "*apologized for any embarrassment he may have caused.*" Welsh asked Kean if he "*had similar difficulties with other persons.*" Kean told Welsh and

## Summary

Muntone that there was another individual, a friend of the reporting victim that he abused around the same time. Kean indicated that if Welsh wished, he could apply for laicization. Welsh informed Kean he would have to go to the treatment center run by the Servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico. Kean asked if he would be returning to his current assignment at St. Joseph's in Ashland, Schuylkill. Bishop Welsh informed Kean that he would not be returning to St. Joseph.

After reviewing information obtained from the Diocese by subpoena, the Grand Jury learned that additional victims of sexual abuse perpetrated by Kean existed and were identified within the secret or confidential archives of the Diocese.

A second victim of abuse by Kean came forward in 1999. The second victim wrote a letter to Kean shortly after meeting with Kean on April 30, 1999. In the letter, the second victim thanked Kean for Kean's admission of fault for sexually abusing him many years prior. He also enclosed another letter he had written two years earlier to Kean while in therapy but did not send. In the enclosed letter, the second victim wrote that he "decided to deal with the feelings/emotions I've repressed for many years regarding the sexual abuse I experienced with you" and "You took advantage of my innocence. You were so manipulative. If only I would have known, but I was only a child." He added, "You have many fine qualities, but many do not know your dark side. The person who took advantage of a young boy for his own sexual gratification." The second victim went on to say how dealing with the abuse at such a vulnerable age has had a significant negative impact on his life.

On April 5, 2018, the second victim contacted the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General by telephone and provided more detail on his encounter with Kean. As a minor boy in the 1970's, he attended SS Peter and Paul Church in Tower City. He was in his early teens and an altar boy when he developed a close relationship with Kean. He noted Father Kean liked to wrestle with the altar boys often. The second victim remembered going to the movies, hanging out and playing at Kean's parents' house. On one occasion, he stayed the night at Kean's parents' house. Kean had the boy sleep in the same bed, which was located in the basement. The boy lay on his side while Kean gave him a massage. Kean started with the second victim's back and moved downward towards the genitals. Kean massaged his penis overtop his underwear. The second victim developed an erection and ejaculated, then left the room and cleaned up. He returned to sleep the rest of the night. Kean did not say anything to the child regarding what happened. In 1999, the victim contacted the Diocesan hotline for Clergy Abuse. He also confronted Kean about the abuse. At this time in 1999, Kean was on leave from ministry.

In April 2002, a third victim reported being abused by Kean. The third victim reported that another priest, Monsignor William Jones, introduced and shared the victim and additional friends of the victim with Kean. The third victim reported that Kean took him and five other boys to his home in Tower City. Kean performed oral sex on the third victim and several other boys in the bedrooms of his home. The third victim reported that Kean was undressed when he performed oral sex on him. The third victim reported he was fifteen years old at the time of the abuse and that Kean performed oral sex on him three times.

## Summary

In February 2002, Kean retired from the priesthood and began to collect his pension, health insurance, life insurance, and car insurance benefits.

In July 2005, the mother of a fourth victim called the Diocese to report that her son was sexually abused by Kean. It was reported that the abuse happened when her son was between the ages of ten and fifteen years old and an altar boy in Tower City. The fourth victim's mother stated the Kean clearly favored her son and that it was not unusual for Kean to take her son to Kean's parents' home. The fourth victim's parents had known about the abuse since their son was in his late teens but never came forward to tell anyone.

In October 2005, the parents of a fifth victim reported to Monsignor Gobitas that their son had been sexually abused by Kean. After meeting with the parents of the fifth victim, Gobitas composed a one-page memorandum-to-file concerning the abuse. The fifth victim was reported by his parents to be addicted to heroin and suicidal. Kean abused the fifth victim in 1987 and 1988, while the fifth victim has in eight and ninth grades. The abuse occurred in St. Joseph's Rectory in Ashland and at Kean's parent's home. Gobitas wrote "the activity" ended when the fifth victim went into tenth grade. In a "Morality Incident Report," Gobitas reported that Kean would engage in immature behavior with the fifth victim such as "*wrestling, chasing each other, tying each other up with rope, etc. In the midst of this behavior there were sexual assaults.*" Gobitas wrote that the fifth victim was unable to discuss many of the details at the time of reporting.