

## Reverend Michael G. Barletta

### Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1939
YEAR OF DEATH:	Unknown
ORDINATION:	May 19, 1966

### Employment/Assignment History

6/04/1966 – 5/30/1975	Secondary Education Kennedy Catholic High School, Hermitage, PA
6/04/1966 – 6/03/1970	Weekend Asst. Sacred Heart, Sharon, PA
6/03/1970 – 6/30/1975	Weekend Asst. St. Joseph, Sharon, PA
1975	Teen Action Club at Cathedral Preparatory, Erie, PA
5/30/1975 – 9/07/1994	Secondary Education Erie Cathedral Preparatory HS
5/30/1975 – 9/07/1994	Weekend Assistant, St Luke's, Erie, PA
9/07/1994 – 8/01/1995	Sabbatical, Other Sabbatical at Southdown Treatment Center Toronto, Canada for Psychological Treatment
8/01/1995 – 2/28/2002	Dioceses Office, Catholic Charities, Erie, PA
8/01/1995 – 2/28/2002	Dioceses Office, Office of Matrimonial Concerns, Erie, PA
8/01/1995 – 2/28/2002	Resident St. Patrick's Resident, Erie, PA
2/28/2002	Retired

### Summary

The Grand Jury received several documents describing Father Michael Barletta's behavior and also heard the testimony of a retired priest who witnessed Barletta with his genitalia exposed in the presence of a child under the age of eighteen years old. This incident occurred between 1969 and 1970. Specifically, on a Saturday afternoon at St Joseph's church in Sharon, Barletta was scheduled to hear confessions along with fellow priest Father John Fischer. When Barletta failed to arrive, Fischer went looking for him. Fischer testified that he walked in on Barletta and a young high school student in Barletta's locked private chambers. Upon entering the room, Fischer observed this young student totally naked from the waist down, with his genitalia exposed. As Fischer withdrew from Barletta's room, he observed the child attempting to pull up his underwear and pants while Barletta stood in the corner and watched. Fischer did not call the police nor notify Barletta's supervisor. Instead, Fischer testified that he reported the incident to a fellow priest and to Bishop Watson, head of the Erie Diocese, two months later. He recalled that Monsignor Hastings dismissed his report of Barletta and the naked child. He also recalled his meeting with Watson and testified that both Hastings and Watson brushed him off and told him to, "Go home, be a good priest." Fischer also testified that when he told his fellow priests about Barletta and the child, they laughed it off. Not long after this incident, Barletta was re-assigned to Erie Cathedral Preparatory.

## Summary

Fischer referred to the Erie Cathedral Preparatory students who received most of Barletta's attention as Barletta's "pretty people." These children participated in a program that Barletta started and called the Teen Action Club ("TAC"). This club was made up of students who were active in the community, church, athletics, and academics. Barletta would provide the students with a shoulder rub, hypnosis, or massage. He would often take his students on vacation with him to places such as Niagara Falls or to his own private camp in a secluded, rural part of Pennsylvania.

In Bishop Trautman's handwritten notes, he recorded the details of a conversation that he had with Sister Donna Markham about Barletta. In those notes, Trautman wrote that Barletta has abused 25 children. Trautman noted that Barletta admitted to the number himself. Trautman also noted that Barletta needed a restricted ministry, possibly a nursing apostolate. He added that Barletta was very defensive and that his abuse included nudity and rub downs, including genital groping, and that Barletta vacationed exclusively with teens.

Barletta was confronted with allegations of oral sex, naked massages, digital anal penetration, and masturbation against a victim in 1994. When confronted, Barletta admitted his guilt to Trautman. This abuse took place when the first victim was a freshman at Erie Cathedral Preparatory. The Diocese paid for the victim's counseling. However, once the victim shared the sexual abuse with the newspaper, Trautman advised that the first victim should seek payment directly from Barletta.

In August of 1994, Monsignor Lawrence Speice notified Bishop Trautman of an allegation from Victim #1, who reported that Barletta or "Barts," attempted to use hypnosis techniques, in conjunction with rub downs, in sexual encounters that included mutual masturbation. Victim #1 reported that "Barts" had a fascination with Victim #1's uncircumcised penis compared to his own and had Victim #1 masturbate while he watched. The Diocese confronted Barletta with Victim #1's accusation, which he denied. The Diocese nevertheless ended up paying out \$14,420.00 to Victim #1.

Victim #2 was a high school senior when he and Victim #1 went on a retreat to Toronto, Canada, with Barletta. In the hotel room, Barletta engaged the boys in nude massages, relaxation techniques, fondling, and eventually masturbation. Barletta denied any sexual encounter with Victim #2, but in his April 2012 letter to the Bishop, Barletta admits to vacationing in Toronto with Victim #2 and Victim #1.

Victim #3 was another of Barletta's victims but little information has been found about him in the Diocese-supplied files. He is referenced as possibly one of the boys who went to the press with Victim #1 about Barletta. The Diocese lists Victim #3 as a victim in their 2003 report to John Jay College with no further details included. That report was compiled nationally by the John Jay College in New York in an attempt to quantify the scope of the problem of child sexual abuse within the Roman Catholic Church. The Grand Jury has found that many dioceses minimized the number of offenders and victims in their responses to this survey.

## Summary

Victim #4 was listed as “*Not Verified*” in the 2003 John Jay Report and few files were turned over by the Diocese pursuant to the subpoena by the Grand Jury. Victim #4’s name was found on handwritten notes from Bishop Trautman, who recorded Victim #4 as having traveled to Niagara Falls with Barletta. In those notes Trautman wrote, “*2 bed, rub down, masturbated, run off to bathroom and tried same thing.*”

Victim #5 had a conversation with Bishop Trautman in 2004 about his abuse at the hands of Barletta. Trautman’s notes recorded that Barletta gave Victim #5 several massages during his Junior and Senior years at Erie Cathedral Preparatory. Trautman noted that Barletta attempted to sexually abuse Victim #5 and that Victim #5 wanted to support his friends who were abused, so he came forward to report Barletta’s advances. In the John Jay Report, the Diocese lists Victim #5 as “*Allegation Withdrawn.*”

Victim #6 was another high school-aged student whose life was impacted by Barletta’s predation. Victim #6’s incident occurred while he was a student at Kennedy Catholic. Victim #6 reported his abuse in 2003 to Trautman and the Bishop confronted Barletta about the incident. At this time, Victim #6 was going through a divorce and came forward to the Diocese for assistance. In his conversation with the Bishop, Barletta admitted to giving Victim #6 a rub down, but did not admit to any further sexual contact. This conversation with Barletta was noted by Trautman on October 2, 2003. In that same document, Trautman made several notes regarding Barletta and Victim #6, such as “*gave massage to calm him, perhaps no clothes and stripped down.*”

Victim #7 was a Kennedy Catholic student who found himself in a vulnerable position at Barletta’s camp. Victim #7 was part of a group of boys who were taken to the camp, where Barletta suggested naked massages. Victim #7 refused and reported that he was never touched on that trip. Victim #7 reported this attempted sexual assault to Monsignor James Burke on November 4, 1988. That complaint was consistent with his complaint to Monsignor Robert Smith on November 25, 2003. However, in his report to Smith, Victim #7 added that he was now aware of several other children who had fallen victim to Barletta.

At the time of Victim #7’s original report to Monsignor Burke in 1988, Barletta was a full-time teacher at Erie Cathedral Preparatory and actively abusing students. Neither Burke nor the Diocese took any action as a result of the 1988 report. Burke memorialized Victim #7’s complaint on January 14, 1991. In a written report to Trautman, Burke explained Victim #7’s complaint and concluded writing, “*I didn’t feel the need to go any further with this at this time.*”

In Victim #7’s 2003 conversation with Smith, he reported that he was mad at the Diocese for its failure to remove Barletta sooner. Victim #7 told Smith that when he made his report to Burke in 1988, the Diocese already knew about Barletta as far back as his days at Kennedy Christian, yet they did nothing. This is an accurate statement. Father Fischer, Bishop Watson and Father Hastings all knew that Fischer had observed Barletta commit a sex crime against a child, yet Fischer was directed to remain silent by Bishop Watson.

## Summary

In 2009, after many years of counseling, Victim #8 notified the Diocese of his abuse at the hands of Barletta. His account is consistent with the tactics that Barletta used against other children. Bishop Trautman documented his conversation with Victim #8 on September 10, 2009. Trautman noted that Victim #8 was befriended by Barletta, taken to a rural farm owned by Barletta in DuBois and abused. Trautman noted that Barletta was “*a calculated abuser who tried to hypnotize him.*”

From 1975 through 1994, when he was finally dismissed from Erie Cathedral Preparatory, Barletta admittedly abused 25 children and young men. After 1994, there are reports and documents that proved that Barletta was allowed to continue ministering to the faithful in the Diocese of Erie. He was appointed to be an Assessor in the Diocesan Tribunal in July 1995 and was appointed to work in the Office of Catholic Charities in 1997. These assignments were granted after Bishop Trautman discovered Barletta’s misdeeds and removed him from public ministry. In one document, written in 1997, Barletta was congratulated on his “*outstanding sermons at Carmel*” by Bishop Trautman.

In 1994, the Diocese listed Barletta as being on sabbatical. He had actually been sent to the Southdown Treatment Center. This information was never released to the parishioners of the Diocese of Erie. Barletta was housed, fed and given therapy at Southdown at a significant cost to the parishioners of Erie, which is detailed in the Diocesan records.

Deeper in the recesses of the diocesan secret archives was a handwritten note from 1968. In this note, Bishop Watson wrote that Barletta “*Spends much time in counselling high school boys – a small number only.*” Thus, the concerns regarding Barletta appear to have been raised early in his career. Diocesan files indicate that in 1993, Monsignor Andrew Karg received a complaint from five fellow priests expressing serious concerns about Barletta. On April 29, 1993, Karg wrote to Trautman about the priests’ fears that Barletta could be “*crossing the line*” into the private lives of the students at Preparatory. Karg adds that Barletta is known to take pictures inside the boys’ locker room of the kids’ crotch area and that Barletta maintains a book of “*crotch shots*” in his residence. These priests questioned Barletta’s personal vacations with the good looking boys and his trips to San Francisco with students. In another bullet point, Karg reported “*Father Dollinger’s*” fear is that if the Catholic Preparatory school ever had a law suit about a pedophile, “*will the 18 years of Father Barletta also come to light?*”