

Father Robert E. Hannon

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1926
YEAR OF DEATH:	2006
ORDINATION:	May 27, 1954

Employment/Assignment History

6/03/1954 – 2/03/1955	Assistant Pastor, Holy Rosary, Erie, PA,
2/03/1955 – 3/27/1957	Assistant Pastor, Sacred Heart, Sharon, PA
3/27/1957 – 2/03/1958	Assistant Pastor, St. Boniface, Kersey, PA
2/03/1958– 5/31/1958	Resident Pastor (Hacherl) asked to have Hannon Removed Assistant Pastor, St Luke’s, Erie, PA Resident Pastor (Goodill) asked to have Hannon Removed
5/31/1958 – 6/12/1965	Administrator, Sacred Heart, Genesee, PA
9/01/1959 – N/A	Appointed Assistant Director of Lay Retreats for the Diocese
6/12/1965 – 6/4/1966	Holy Cross, Brandy Camp, PA
6/04/1966 – N/A	Administrator, St. Mathew, Erie, PA
6/06/1966 – 6/16/1967	Administrator, St. Cyprian, Waterford, PA
6/16/1967 – 6/01/1979	Pastor, St. Mathew in the Wood, Erie, PA
4/13/1978	Requests transfer to Diocese of Hawaii
6/01/1979	Released to Diocese of Hawaii
9/19/1979 – 7/18/1980	Asst. Pastor, St. John the Apostle, HI
7/18/1980 – 6/1/1981	Associate Pastor, St. Cattistus, Kane, PA
6/01/1981	Associate Pastor, St. Elizabeth, Aiea, HI
4/26/1984	Holy Trinity Church, Honolulu, HI
7/17/1984	Incardinated into Diocese of Hawaii
10/20/2003 – 1/16/2006	Residence at Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace, Diocese of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI
1/16/2006	Death Announcement

Summary

Father Robert Hannon was a Roman Catholic Priest who was posted in several states and abused children in each Diocese to which he was assigned. In 1962, he began his ministry in the Diocese of Erie, where he was assigned until 1978. At that time, Hannon turned his attention toward the Diocese of Hawaii.

In 2003, in response to the John Jay College study on clergy sexual abuse, the Diocese of Erie acknowledged the existence of eight known victims of Hannon’s sexual assaults. The Grand Jury has found from subpoenaed documents that as early as 1986 that the Diocese of Hawaii, and possibly the Diocese of Erie as well, knew that Father Hannon had admittedly abused at least twenty youths between twelve and nineteen years of age. This admission came

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to light while Hannon was receiving treatment for his behavior at Foundation House, which is a psychiatric facility operated by servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico. Documentation was found in the subpoenaed files discussing which Diocese was going to foot the bill for Hannon's extensive treatment.

Of the eight victims acknowledged by the Diocese of Erie, one is categorized as "*claim denied, not verified*" based solely upon a denial by Hannon himself. That victim, Hannon's only known female victim, was abused in Hawaii by Hannon on one of his many trips to the islands before he was incardinated into the Diocese of Hawaii in 1979. This abuse occurred in approximately 1974 while Hannon was visiting Victim #1's parents in Hawaii. Victim #1 claims that while Hannon was tucking her and her sister into bed, he fondled her underneath her underpants. Victim #1 stated that this abuse happened more than once but she could not state a number of times she was abused.

In 2004, this female victim was interviewed by a professional chosen by the Diocese of Hawaii. Ms. Barbara Mullen, who worked in that Diocese with Victim Assistance for Catholic Charities, interviewed Victim #1 in February of 2004. It was the professional opinion of Mullen and Rev. Gary Secor from Hawaii that Victim #1's claims against Hannon were "*extremely credible*." Nonetheless, the Diocese of Erie sided with Hannon because he had previously admitted to abusing only boys. On May 5, 2004, Hannon denied having ever abused any females stating, "*They do not have a penis*."

Much, if not all, of Hannon's abuse came to light only after he was incardinated into the Diocese of Hawaii. This is why he received most of his professional counseling in the western part of the United States. The subpoenaed documents supplied to the Grand Jury contain voluminous correspondence between the two Dioceses discussing which was responsible for the costs of Hannon's care and pension. Also contained in this file is correspondence between Hannon and the Diocese of Erie. These letters consist of Hannon's apologies for all the trouble he has caused and acknowledgment of the funds sent back to the Erie Diocese by Hannon. These funds were sent to Erie to be applied toward financial settlements with his victims. In one such handwritten document, Hannon apologized to Bishop Trautman and thanked him for his phone call prior to Hannon's annual flight to Erie. Hannon expressed his concerns about airport security to Trautman and wrote that Trautman's call reminded him that cancelling his trip to Erie was "*a good thing – to avoid any warrants*."

As a result of Hannon's denial, Victim #1 was sent a letter by the law firm of Quinn, Buseck, Leemhuis, Toohey and Kroto, Inc. This is the law firm that represented the Diocese of Erie on January 3, 2005, when the letter was sent. In that document, Victim #1 was told that the Erie Review Board could not verify any of her allegations made against Hannon. The Diocese would agree to provide four to six months of counseling to assist her in reconciling her present situation, however. Attorney Kroto still works for the Diocese to this day.

Hannon's victims were, in most cases, the children of parishioners and/or altar servers. By his own admission, he would congratulate his altar servers after mass with a friendly hug and "a little green", as Hannon referred to cash. This hug and gift of money soon grew into an

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ostensible friendship between Hannon and his victims that helped pave the way for their exploitation. Another one of Hannon's methods was to ingratiate himself with his victims' families. Hannon was charming enough to get himself invited into his victims' homes to have drinks with their parents and even be invited to stay the night. Once the other adults were asleep, Hannon would molest his victims while their parents slept. Another one of Hannon's tactics was to take the children of parents he had befriended to his residence at the rectory for "sleep overs", where he would have unfettered access to the children.

The following is a brief recitation of Hannon's eight known victims within the Diocese of Erie. It is unknown to what extent, if any, the Diocese ever informed law enforcement officials about Hannon's conduct.

Victim #1, as detailed above, was Hannon's only known female victim. She was six to seven years old when Hannon fondled her. The Diocese of Hawaii found her claim to be credible but the Diocese of Erie did not and only offered to counsel her for four to six months.

Victim #2 was sixteen years old at the time of his sexual assault in the mid 1970's. Hannon testified at Victim #2's military court martial trial that he performed oral sex on Victim #2 at least twelve times when he was an altar server at Hannon's parish. Victim #2 was found guilty of espionage and sentenced to federal prison;

Victim #3 was twelve years old at the time Hannon fondled his genitals. The Diocese and Victim #3 came to a \$20,000 settlement in 2002.

Very little is documented by the Diocese about Victim #4, only that Bishop Trautman found his claim to be a "good report." Trautman notes that Hannon abused Victim #4 for over one-and-a-half years. Trautman offered to personally counsel Victim #4.

Victim #5 was fifteen to sixteen years old in 1978–1979 when Hannon abused him. Details of his abuse were not found in the Diocesan files. The Diocese settled with Victim #5 for \$5,000 on November 14, 2003, however. Also found in the Diocese files was a copy of a check written to the Diocese of Erie by Hannon dated November 3, 2003 in the amount of \$5,000.

Victim #6 was eight to ten years old in the late 1950's when Hannon befriended him, took him on trips, and engaged him in oral sex. This victim first notified the Diocese of Erie of his abuse in 1993, several years after Hannon went to Hawaii.

Victim #7 was approximately nine years old when Hannon began molesting him in 1976. His abuse lasted until 1981. Hannon endeared himself to Victim #7's family and was invited to their home for meals, holidays, and sleep-overs. Over these years, Hannon sexually abused Victim #7 late at night and forced him to pose in explicit positions that Hannon then photographed. Victim #7's parents became aware of Hannon's acts in 1981 and called for a meeting with the Bishop. This meeting never happened and Victim #7's parents let the matter drop. In 1995, Victim #7 and his family settled with the Diocese of Erie for \$39,000.

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Victim #8 was approximately eleven years old in the early 1970's when Hannon abused him. Hannon fondled him, had oral sex with him, and penetrated Victim #8's anus with his fingers. This abuse all occurred while Victim #8 worked as an alter server and performed cleaning duties at Hannon's parish. Victim #8 reported his abuse to Bishop Trautman in July 2006. Trautman noted that he assured Victim #8 and his wife that "*the priest accused of molesting him has long died.*" In reality, Hannon had only passed away six months prior.

These eight are only the known victims of Father Hannon. Hannon admitted to abusing at least twenty victims, which leads the Grand Jury to conclude that there were many more, as yet unknown, victims, both in the Diocese of Erie and in Hawaii. The investigation was unable to uncover the identities and experiences of these additional victims. This is due, in part, to the fact that the Grand Jury did not have access to the pertinent files from the Diocese of Hawaii.

Hannon passed away on January 16, 2006, while in residence at the Cathedral of Our Lady of Peace in the Diocese of Hawaii. He apparently remained in the good graces of both the Dioceses of Erie and Hawaii at the time of his death.