

Father Francis Lesniak

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1916
YEAR OF DEATH:	1991
ORDINATION:	June 6, 1943

Employment/Assignment History

8/12/1943 –2/27/1946	St. Monica, Wampum and St. Theresa, Hoytdale, PA
2/28/1946 –2/10/1953	St. Mary, New Kensington, PA
2/11/1953 –5/14/1953	St. Bernard, Indiana, PA
5/15/1953 –8/3/1954	Transfiguration Church, Mount Pleasant, PA
8/4/1954 –4/3/1956	St. Mary, New Kensington, PA
4/4/1956 –9/7/1960	St. Michael, Glen Campbell and SS Peter & Paul, Arcadia, PA
9/8/1960 –8/31/1965	St. Stanislaus, Calmut, PA
9/1/1965 –6/26/1969	St. Anne, Fellsburg and Holy Cross, Webster, PA
6/27/1969 –5/24/1976	Seven Dolors, Yukon, PA
5/25/1976 –8/1987	St. Francis de Paul, Ford City, PA

Summary

Via a telephone call placed on March 3, 2004, the Diocese of Greensburg received its first sexual abuse allegation against Father Francis Lesniak. A victim reported that in approximately 1977 when he was 13 years old, Lesniak fondled his genitals in a church rectory. Although the summary of the complaint did not specify in which rectory the abuse occurred, Lesniak's assignment history would place the incident at St. Francis de Paul church.

In describing the incident, the victim explained that Lesniak invited him to "*an overnight social for the altar boys at the parish.*" When he arrived at the rectory, he realized that he was the only boy to attend. While watching television, he claimed Lesniak began rubbing his genitals over his clothes.

When the victim initially informed his mother about what had occurred with Lesniak, she did not believe him.

Although the victim requested financial compensation for the alleged abuse by Lesniak, the Diocese of Greensburg initially stated such compensation was not available. However, in January of 2006, the Diocese ultimately settled with the victim for \$5,000 and 90 counseling sessions.

In September of 2004, a second victim alleged that he was sexually assaulted by Lesniak in 1962. In this incident, Lesniak took the victim and a friend ice-skating, followed by an

Summary

overnight stay at the rectory. Although the summary of the incident did not specify in which rectory the abuse occurred, Lesniak's assignment history would place it at St. Stanislaus. The victim claimed that as he was on the verge of falling asleep, Lesniak fondled his genitals on the sofa. The victim feigned waking up and then went to bed. He later awoke to find Lesniak attempting to fondle his genitals again.

The second victim ultimately settled with the Diocese for \$5,000 and 90 counseling sessions.

A third victim approached the Diocese on May 13, 2005 and alleged that in 1965 or 1966, Lesniak fondled his genitals during an overnight stay at the rectory. Once again, the summary of the complaint did not specify in which rectory the abuse occurred, but Lesniak's assignment history would place the incident in either St. Stanislaus, St. Anne, or Holy Cross. The third victim claimed that when Lesniak took him swimming, he would, on occasion, attempt to fondle his genitals in the pool.

In January of 2006, the Diocese settled a civil lawsuit with the third victim for \$5,000 and 90 counseling sessions.

In 2007, a fourth victim alleged that Lesniak sexually abused him from 1983 through approximately 1987 or 1988 while he was attending St. Francis of Paola in Ford City. According to the victim, the abuse began when he was approximately seven or eight years old and occurred during the summer after his first Holy Communion at a picnic at Falcon Park. Lesniak took the victim on a walk, which eventually led to Lesniak's vehicle, where Lesniak forced the victim to perform oral sex on him. After this incident, the victim became an altar boy. Lesniak informed him that altar boys must go to confession each time before they served mass. Instead of taking the victim to the confessional, however, Lesniak took him into a back room of the church. "*Father Lesniak would listen to his sins and indicated to him that if he was not too bad he would 'get to suck on a strawberry lollipop or popsicle.'*" The victim stated that after confession, Lesniak would expose his penis and tell him it was his "strawberry lollipop." This particular scenario occurred dozens of times.

Lesniak's abuse of the fourth victim eventually escalated to anal rape. During these rapes, Lesniak reportedly told the victim, "*this is what all good altar boys do.*" The victim claimed that Lesniak provided him with wine every time he anally raped him. As he stated, "*I remember that he gave me wine before every time that he put his penis in me. I can remember drinking whole large containers full of wine.*" This abuse occurred well over 100 times over the course of approximately four years.

The fourth victim reported that he experienced a number of problems as a result of Lesniak's abuse, including severe issues with intimacy and trust, poor anger management, depression, low self-esteem, and stomach cramps when he was nervous or upset. Additionally, he became an alcoholic by the time he turned twelve years old.