

Reverend Paul R. Fisher

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1967
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	January 1, 1977

Employment/Assignment History

1995-1997	St. Norbert, Paoli, PA
1997-1998	Archmere Academy, Claymont, Delaware
6/16/1998-6/19/2003	Queen of Peace, Millersburg, PA
6/2003	Incardinated as a Priest of the Diocese of Harrisburg
6/19/2003-6/18/2009	Sacred Heart of Jesus, Cornwall, PA
6/18/2009-6/20/2011	St. Columbia, Bloomsburg, PA
6/20/2011-6/20/2016	Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Harrisburg, PA

Summary

On February 18, 2011, Bishop Joseph McFadden issued a Decree after receiving a report from the Secretary of Clergy and Consecrated Life that Father Paul Fisher made a self-incriminating report involving pornography, “*which may include child pornography.*” The Decree was/is to remain in the Diocese’s secret archives to safeguard the reputation of all persons involved. Fisher agreed to allow the Diocese of Harrisburg to obtain his electronic devices (laptop and cell phone) and have them forensically examined by a local company.

In February 2011, Diocesan officials interviewed Fisher. Fisher stated that he conducted online searches for pornography that included “*incest*” and “*really sick, abusive stories.*” He stated that he was more interested in fantasy stories. He admitted sometimes the “*son character in the story (or eventually, the brother/sister characters) looked under 18.*” He stated that he was not interested in the images, however, he noted the images depicted naked people, including “*all out porn, including penetration.*” He admitted he went to nudist websites where there were images of nude children playing volleyball, but no sexual acts were depicted on said websites.

The Diocese sent Fisher for treatment and evaluation. The forensic examination of Fisher’s electronic devices did not identify images depicting the sexual abuse of children, even though Fisher admitted it was possible.

Bishop McFadden placed Fisher back into ministry.

The Diocese of Harrisburg’s subsequent bishop, Bishop Ronald Gainer, reviewed the restricted files in 2016. In June 2016, Gainer issued a decree to reinvestigate the matter involving Fisher due to his admission of viewing pornographic images of minors.

Summary

On June 20, 2016, the Diocese interviewed Fisher a second time. He consented to the Diocese forensically examining his current laptop, which was not Fisher's laptop from 2011. He noted he only had the new laptop for a few months, stating his previous laptop had been stolen. Diocesan officials told Fisher that they would have to turn over to the Dauphin District Attorney's Office what was found in the forensic examination conducted in 2011 of Fisher's first laptop. The Diocese gave the new laptop to the same forensic company. Later that day, Fisher called [REDACTED] and rescinded his consent for an examination of the new laptop and stated that he had obtained civil counsel.

A second forensic examination was conducted on the 2011 hard drive image. This time, a questionable image was found. As in 2011, numerous elicit websites were also in the search history. The Office of Attorney General obtained a search warrant, which resulted in a law enforcement forensic examination of the 2011 hard drive image (results pending).

[REDACTED] wrote a Diocesan document dated August 8, 2016, which appeared to summarize a conference call that occurred in the morning of that same day. The document appeared to also summarize a meeting that occurred on August 4, 2016. [REDACTED] stated there was a collective disappointment at the results of a risk assessment of Fisher that was conducted at St. John Vianney Center. Additionally, [REDACTED] also stated there was collective disappointment at the *"countermeasures he [Fisher] was believed to have employed to invalidate the results of the polygraph [administered to Fisher]."* A sentence in the document stated, *"His [Fisher] clarification on the polygraph question regarding masturbating to the images of minors, his persistent need to clarify his responses to our committee and his decision not to take a second polygraph test because of his belief that his answers 'were always more than yes or no' left Bishop Gainer with too little certitude about returning him to ministry."*

On August 8, 2016, Fisher was discharged from the evaluation program at St. John Vianney Center and requested to reside at the Canonry of his former's Order, the Norbertines in Delaware. Gainer wrote a letter to the Bishop of Wilmington, Delaware, advising him of Fisher's stay at the Norbertines' Canonry and he has no active ministry at this time. He noted that Fisher wished to return to the Norbertine community and be reinstated as a Norbertine priest instead of a Diocesan priest. Gainer also noted he was sending paperwork to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for guidance and advice. He noted: "if he is at that time considered suitable for active ministry, I will then be willing to consider his return to active ministry as a Norbertine."

Chancellor Carol Houghton of the Diocese of Harrisburg testified before the Grand Jury on October 20, 2017. She stated she had a great concern with Fisher being placed back in ministry in 2011 when he admitted to viewing images of naked children. Houghton stated she questioned McFadden about his decision. McFadden told her to forget it because nothing was found criminal on the laptop. Chancellor Houghton reviewed the clergy files in 2016 and remained concerned with how the Diocese handled the Fisher matter in 2011. She raised her concern to [REDACTED] and they approached Gainer, which resulted in the Diocese interviewing Fisher again in 2016, which is summarized above.