

# Reverend Joseph D. Karabin

## Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1947
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 4, 1974

## Employment/Assignment History

1974 - 1979	Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Midland, PA
1979 – 1980	St. Joan of Arc, Library, PA
1980	St. Joseph the Worker, New Castle, PA
1980 – 1981	Holy Name, Duquesne, PA
1981 – 1986	St. Albert the Great, Baldwin, PA
1986 – 2002	Braddock Hospital, Braddock , PA

## Summary

In March 1980, the Diocese of Pittsburgh received a report from a victim who was sexually abused by Father Joseph D. Karabin while Karabin was assigned to St. Joan of Arc. Bishop Vincent Leonard then sent a letter to the House of Affirmation, a treatment center, notifying them that Karabin would arrive on March 25, 1980 for an evaluation with respect to the “incident” which Leonard advised he did not want to describe in the letter. Karabin was returned to active ministry after he completed treatment.

In March, 1985, Father Raymond Froelich, Pastor of St. Albert the Great where Karabin was assigned as Parochial Vicar, notified Bishop Bevilacqua of another child whom Father Karabin had sexually abused.

On March 7, 1985, two memorandums by Bishop Bosco documented a meeting held between himself and Karabin in with respect to the new report. Bosco advised Karabin that he would have to be reassigned due to the complaint. Karabin agreed, but “*did not seem happy*” with the possibility that his reassignment may not be immediate due to this being a “*recurrence of a previous problem.*” According to Karabin, this “*latest incident*” was caused by stress he was under from not having his own pastorate. He related that if he was assigned as a pastor of a parish, it would prevent him from “*acting out.*” Handwritten notes by Bishop Bevilacqua on one of the memorandums stated, among other things, “*I do not feel Father Karabin should be given another immediate assignment after leaving his present one. There should be some sign to him that what he did was very grave.*”

Diocesan records contained undated handwritten notes that appeared to have been written by Father Dattilo in 1985 after the second report of sexual abuse by Karabin had been received by the Diocese. Among other things, Dattilo made the following notations:

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- “How is the Diocese liable for his actions?”
- “It is best he hear this in therapy and that we be honest about his status and not protect him.”
- “What is his standing in the Diocese after 2 incidents?”
- “Is not like an alcoholic mistake. Can mean jail & scandal & lawsuit.”
- “Joe [Karabin] wants to know if the incident was reported. Does he have a record? Can legal action be taken\_\_\_for how long?”

On March 13, 1985, Karabin was sent to St. Luke Institute for evaluation and treatment.

From April 1985 through September 1985, the Diocese documented that St. Luke Institute advised that Karabin was not a pedophile but had a “*homosexual interest in boys 15 – 18*” and that the “*two incidents*” of “*acting out*” were partially due to alcohol. However, because the initial treatment center in 1980 advised Karabin that he was not an alcoholic, this “*confused him and gave him permission to drink.*” Furthermore, it was noted that because the treatment center informed him that he was not a homosexual, this “*gave him permission to act out sexually.*”

The records also contained handwritten notes from August 27, 1985 which appeared to have been written by Dattilo with respect to Karabin. Among other things, the notes documented that approximately two weeks prior to Easter in 1985, an eighth grade boy reported to Father Froelich that Karabin had “*touched him in private parts*” and that he was afraid of Karabin.

On April 24, 1989, a letter was sent from the Western Regional Office of Children, Youth, and Families (“WROCYP”) to Bishop Wuerl documenting a meeting held on November 16, 1988 between WROCYP, Diocesan representatives and counsel for the Diocese. Among other things, the WROCYP advised Wuerl that the Diocese was considered to be a mandated reporter of child sexual abuse and was therefore required to report any suspected abuse immediately. Further, the WROCYP advised that the Diocese was not permitted to conduct its own internal investigation to determine whether or not to report such abuse, but was required to report it immediately on becoming aware of it.

On June 30, 1989, a letter was sent by Wuerl to the Vatican with respect to other priests recently accused of child sexual abuse. Wuerl advised the Vatican of actions taken against the priests, details of the Diocesan policies for dealing with the sexual abuse of children by priests, and his own judgements in regards to the serious nature of child sexual abuse. Further, Wuerl advised that due to the scandal caused by these priests, he initiated a review of any previous cases of Diocesan priests who had been accused of “*pedophilic activities*” with minors. He stated that Bishops and Dioceses could become liable once they were made aware of sexual abuse complaints; that priests who denied the “*crime*” of pedophilic activity with minors was “*common in pedophiles;*” that pedophilia was “*incurable;*” and that the “*unassignability*” of a priest must rest solely with the Bishop. This was due to “*parents who have a moral right to expect chaste conduct from the priest,*” and the parishioners who “*would be gravely unsettled and scandalized in the knowledge that a priest pedophile has been assigned in their midst.*”

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On October 30, 1991, Father Robert Guay, Secretary for Clergy and Religious and Vicar for Clergy, met with a third victim who advised that he had been sexually abused by Karabin. The victim advised that when he was approximately 13 to 14-years-old and an altar boy, Karabin undressed him, fondled him, and attempted anal sex with him.

On November 1, 1991, Guay and then-Bishop David Zubik met with Karabin with respect to the latest report. Karabin advised that he made a sexual pass at the victim and although he did not remember touching him, this *“isn't to say he didn't”* and that he was in an *“alcoholic stupor”* at the time. Karabin then admitted to sexually abusing two additional boys as well. From the handwritten notes in the file, it appears that Karabin may have been referring to the two previous cases set forth above.

On April 23, 1993, Guay sent a letter to Karabin with respect to recent work that Karabin had been performing. Guay advised that Wuerl was *“very much concerned”* that

*such activities, while helpful in conveying the message of priests in recovery and ministry, might eventually compromise your ministry as well as the diocese should the anonymity ever be broken.*

Guay advised that he believed that Wuerl was *“very nervous about this.”*

On June 21, 1993, Karabin sent a handwritten letter to Wuerl requesting an assignment to a parish. Included on the letter were separate handwritten notes that appear to state that the *“circle of secrecy has to be broken- if you want another assignment- if not work in our confines,”* *“Can't make us responsible for his viewpoint,”* *“Recognition from himself or others,”* *“Dignity,”* *“Policy- this is what he has to do.”*

On July 1, 1997, Karabin sent a handwritten letter to Wuerl requesting an assignment as pastor of the Risen Lord. Separate handwritten notes on the letter stated, *“I met w Joe on July 3 and shared with him that Bishop Wuerl feels that it is best that he remain at Braddock Hospital and that Joe keep a 'low profile'.”*

Diocesan records contained a September 5, 1997 a memorandum that was sent to Zubik from Father Ruggiero. Ruggiero advised that, *“There is nothing in our file relating to the more recent allegation you spoke of made by a college youth who met Father Karabin at Braddock Hospital.”*

On January 6, 2002, an article detailing the Catholic Church practice of reassigning priests accused of sexual abuse of children was published in the Boston Globe. Several weeks later on February 22, 2002, Father John Rushofsky, Director of Clergy Personnel, sent a letter to Father Thomas Wagner at Good Shepherd advising him that Wuerl had appointed Karabin as Chaplain to the residents and staff at the Vincentian Home and Vincentian Regency, effective February 25, 2002. However, on February 28, 2002, letters were sent from Rushofsky advising that Wuerl had withdrawn this appointment. That same day, Father James Young, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Religious, sent a letter to Karabin advising him that Wuerl had withdrawn

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his faculties and that he was no longer a priest in good standing.

Wuerl sent Karabin a letter dated July 16, 2002 wherein he advised that Karabin's resignation had been accepted. However, Wuerl further advised that *"I assure you that your sustenance needs and benefits will continue according to the norms of law."*

On November 2, 2004, a Votum to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was submitted to the Vatican by Wuerl documenting Karabin's history. Wuerl requested that Karabin's withdrawal from active ministry be accepted by the Congregation. Wuerl noted that Karabin continued to receive his sustenance and health benefits. The request was accepted. In a letter to Wuerl dated April 4, 2005, the Congregation noted that it had decided that Wuerl's methods to *"deal with the issue at hand are canonically and pastorally sound."* The letter further noted that the *"incident"* of abuse, *"while serious in nature, occurred over twenty-five years ago and at a time when the priest was in an alcoholic stupor."*

On November 3, 2004, Father Young sent a letter to Karabin wherein Karabin was advised that his current sustenance payments would be reduced to the normal amount of \$750 per month, plus his other benefits of health insurance, room, board, and residence. His monthly sustenance had been equal to his full salary from the time he was placed on administrative leave on February 28, 2002 until this date.

On July 20, 2006, Diocesan personnel sent a confidential memorandum to Bishop Bradley advising him that Karabin had requested to move out of the Cardinal Dearden Center and into his sister's home. Karabin requested that the \$475 per month cost to house him at the Center be added to his continued sustenance payments and paid directly to him once he moved. The Clergy Task Force approved this request.

On October 1, 2007 Father David Bonnar, Secretary for Parish Life and Ministerial Leadership, sent a letter to Karabin. In the letter, he stated that the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette had recently published an article that named a number of priests allegedly involved in cases of sexual abuse that prompted lawsuits against the Diocese. Bonnar advised, *"Please know that the Diocese of Pittsburgh did not furnish the names for this article."*