

Reverend John William Wellinger

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1944
YEAR OF DEATH:	2011
ORDINATION:	May 16, 1970

Employment/Assignment History

6/15/1970-5/20/79	Assistant at St. Wendelin, Pittsburgh, PA
5/21/1975-5/1977	Graduate Studies in Theology, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C.
6/08/1977-8/31/1979	Assistant Pro Tem, St. Athanasius, West View, PA
9/01/1979-6/29/1981	Faculty of the Pontifical College Josephinum, Worthington, OH for the scholastic year of 1979-1980
6/30/1980-6/29/1981	Assistant Pro Tem, St. Cyril of Alexandria, Pittsburgh, PA
6/30/1981-7/14/1985	Assistant, St. James, Wilkinsburg, PA
7/15/1985-1/25/1987	Parochial Vicar Assistant, St. Clare, Clairton, PA
1/26/1987-6/23/1987	Parochial Vicar Assistant, Our Lady of Grace, Scott Township, PA
6/24/1987-6/24/1991	Pastor, Holy Spirit, West Mifflin, PA
8/01/1987	Campus Ministries, Community College of Allegheny County South Campus, West Mifflin, PA
6/11/1991	Resignation for reasons of health
1/24/1992-2/06/1994	Parochial Vicar (Pro Tem) at St. George, Allentown, PA
2/07/1994-6/01/1995	Parochial Vicar, St. Philip, Crafton, PA
5/16/1995	Resigned for personal reasons
5/18/1995	Leave of Absence
1/16/2003	Placed on Administrative Leave
3/01/2003	Declared de facto withdrawn from active ministry

Summary

On or about February 19, 1986, Father John Wellinger was sent to the St. Luke's Institute for a number of issues, including drug and alcohol abuse.

Diocesan records received pursuant to a Grand Jury subpoena revealed that on the evening of October 8, 1987, Wellinger provided alcohol and drugs to an 18-year-old parishioner of the Holy Spirit church. The parishioner had a "bad reaction" to the drugs and had to be taken to Shadyside Hospital for treatment. Within days, Wellinger was confronted by the victim's parents. Efforts were made by the church to promote a reconciliation between Wellinger, the victim and the victim's parents.

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On July 12, 1988, a letter was sent to Bishop Wuerl from “*Concerned Parishioners*” of Holy Spirit. This letter outlined concerns about drug use and excessive drinking to the point of intoxication by Wellinger. The parishioners also expressed concern about Wellinger exposing the young people of the church to illegal drugs.

On June 22, 1989, Father Theodore Rutkowski of the Office of Clergy and Pastoral Life received a letter from a parishioner at Holy Spirit. Bishop Wuerl was carbon copied in the correspondence. In this letter, the parishioner listed a number of problems that the parish was having with Wellinger. In part, the letter read “*Just to refresh your memory and bring you up to date on John’s ministry here at Holy Spirit here are some of the significant problems . . .*” The list included: “*Giving drugs and alcohol to teens;*” “*Teens in the parish have been warned by their parents about drugs from Father;*” and “*Young men staying at the parish house.*”

On June 3, 1991, Wellinger was drinking alcoholic beverages with a 24-year-old man in the rectory. Wellinger unbuttoned the man’s pants and began to perform oral sex on him without consent. A few days later, the victim reported the incident to the Diocese. Wellinger was subsequently questioned by Diocesan officials, at which time he admitted to the unsolicited sexual activity with the victim. Wellinger was then sent to St. Michael’s Community in St. Louis, Missouri for an evaluation. Wellinger’s absence from the parish was explained as a request for resignation for “*reasons of health.*”

On January 2, 1992, a meeting took place between Wuerl and Wellinger. The Bishop agreed that Wellinger could return to priestly ministry and was appointed as Parochial Vicar (Pro Tem) at St. George in Allentown.

On July 30, 1994, Wellinger was stopped by officers of the Borough of Crafton Police Department for driving under the influence of alcohol. Father David Zubik, Director of Clergy Personnel, subsequently notified Wellinger that he had been placed on a leave of absence until he returned from an evaluation at St. Luke’s Institute. Wellinger was at St. Luke’s from September 29, 1994 to March 27, 1995. Because he did not complete the required treatment, his leaving was unauthorized by the Diocese. On May 18, 1995, Wuerl granted Wellinger a leave of absence from June 1, 1995 to December 1, 1995 for “*personal reasons.*”

On September 22, 1995, Diocesan officials met with the parents of a 17-year-old boy. The parents said that a week earlier, their son told them he had been sexually molested by Wellinger. This abuse reportedly occurred in June 1991, when he the victim was 13 years old. The victim stated he and some of his friends were watching videos with Wellinger late into the night. They all fell asleep on the floor. The victim awakened to find that Wellinger had put his hands down the victim’s pants and was fondling his penis. More than two weeks later, on October 10, 1995, Diocesan officials met with Wellinger to discuss the allegations. Wellinger admitted to spending a lot of time with the victim. Wellinger denied consciously touching the victim’s genitals. Wellinger explained that he did fall asleep on the floor with the victim. He said it was “*pretty tight quarters*” so he may have “*unknowingly*” touched the victim’s genitals. The Diocese did not report the matter to law enforcement for years. Instead, arrangements were made to provide counseling for the victim. The victim later notified Diocesan officials that

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during counseling, he was informed that the sexual abuse that occurred was his own fault. By the year 2004, the victim's allegations against Wellinger became part of a lawsuit that accused the Diocese of conspiracy to cover up the sexual abuse of minors. By March 21, 2005, the victim had disclosed Wellinger had molested him on several occasions. He stated these incidents occurred both in the rectory where Wellinger lived and at the victim's home. In 2007, Bishop Paul Bradley settled the lawsuit, which included accusations from 32 individuals against 17 priests, for \$1.25 million.

On November 9, 2012, a woman contacted the Diocese to report that her brother had just died in August of that year. She indicated that about a month prior to his death, he told her he had been molested by Wellinger, while Wellinger was assigned to St. James. The woman explained that her brother was an altar boy when the abuse occurred and he was about 11 or 12 years of age at that time. She estimated the assault(s) took place in 1981 to 1982. She added that Wellinger used illegal drugs and he provided drugs to some of the children.