

# Reverend Robert G. Wolk

## Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1940
YEAR OF DEATH:	N/A
ORDINATION:	May 4, 1966

## Employment/Assignment History

6/07/1966-5/30/1972	St. Athanasius, West View, PA
9/1972-5/1974	Attended Catholic University of America
5/30/1974-1986	Assistant Chancellor of the Diocese of Pittsburgh
7/22/1979-6/10/1981	La Roche College, Pittsburgh, PA
5/13/1986-9/23/1987	St. Thomas More Church, Bethel Park, PA
9/24/1987	Resigned

## Summary

Located within the confidential files of the Diocese of Pittsburgh was a handwritten memorandum from "T.R.", presumably Reverend Theodore Rutkowski, regarding Father Robert Wolk. It indicated that on September 22, 1987, Father Bober and Rutkowski met with an adult male who attended St. Vincent College in Latrobe, PA. The victim explained that he had been experiencing anger and frustration because he felt that he had been used and abused. The victim explained that when he was 12 years old and in the sixth grade, he became friendly with Wolk, a resident at St. Thomas More. The victim stated he was invited into the rectory by Wolk to watch football games and to socialize. Eventually the use of cigarettes and alcohol became part of this socializing. The socialization progressed into "belly rubs" and then "oral sex on the part of both." The victim added that x-rated movies were sometimes involved as well. The victim reported sometimes he would stay overnight at the rectory in Wolk's apartment. The victim indicated that his sexual relationship continued with Wolk for an extended period of time. The victim added, however, that he was greatly concerned about his brother, who was two years younger than him. The victim indicated that his younger brother had a similar sexual relationship with Wolk, which included "oral sex on the part of both." The victim indicated that neither he, nor his brother, had a current relationship with Wolk.

Located within this same memorandum was a notation that read:

*On 9-24-87, Father Wolk came to the Clergy office to meet with Father Rutkowski and Father Guay. Father Wolk admitted without hesitation his sexual relationship with [the two minor victims]. He said his relationship with the victims was over. He understood the necessary action to be taken by the Diocese, as explained by Father Rutkowski and Father Guay. Father Wolk will leave the rectory today. He will go to St Fidelis Monastery, Herman, PA., under the supervision of Fathers Brendan Malloy and Bernard Finerty, where he will*

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*remain until he departs for St. Luke Institute for an October 12-23, 1987 evaluation there. He will not celebrate mass publicly. He will not return to the parish after today's departure. He will not communicate with (the victims), nor the (victims' family)."*

From October 9, 1987 until June 21, 1988, Wolk received treatment/therapy at St. Luke Institute in Maryland.

On or about August 1988, a lawsuit was filed by the two above-mentioned victims. Wolk was named as a defendant along with Father Francis Pucci and Father Richard Zula.

On or about September 1988, the two victims reported the assaults to the Bethel Park Police Department and the Pennsylvania State Police. It was subsequently determined that some of the sexual assaults committed by Wolk on one of the victims occurred in Washington County. This happened on or about 1982, when the victim's family moved to Washington County.

On October 11, 1988, Wolk was charged in Allegheny County with sexually assaulting the two victims, who were altar boys at the time of the assaults. These assaults occurred over a six year period. The charges against Wolk involved oral sodomy and attempted anal sex. During the investigation it was alleged that other unnamed priests conducted sado-masochistic rituals on several young boys in Washington and Somerset Counties, as well as in Florida and Canada. Contacted shortly after news that charges had been filed against Wolk, Father Ron Lengwin, spokesman for the Diocese, was quoted in an October 11, 1988 article in the Pittsburgh Press as stating:

*Our response was to follow the diocesan policy that was set for cases of alleged sexual misconduct. The policy calls for the diocese to interview the person said to be abused, that person's parents or both, as circumstances dictate, then interview the subject of the allegation. The third step is the removal of the priest from his assignment if that is deemed appropriate after the initial interviews. The fourth step would be medical and psychological assessment, including counseling, of the alleged offender and finally, pastoral concern and support for the alleged victims and the priest. St. Luke's is an extended psychiatric care facility for priests.*

On January 24, 1990, Wolk pled guilty in Allegheny County to four counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse and to corruption of minors. He was sentenced to five to 10 years of incarceration. At his sentencing, a clinical psychologist from St. Luke's testified on Wolk's behalf. He stated that Wolk underwent about seven months of inpatient treatment and attended outpatient therapy at the hospital. He stated that Wolk suffered from a psychological disorder—a compulsive attraction to adolescents which the psychologist “likened to alcoholism.”

On June 28, 1990, Wolk pleaded guilty in Washington County to two counts of involuntary deviate sexual intercourse. In the Washington County case, Wolk received a sentence of five to 10 years, to be served concurrently to his Allegheny County sentence.

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A Pittsburgh Press newspaper article quoted then-Washington County District Attorney John C. Pettit as saying the cooperation of the Diocese in the investigation was “*minimal at best.*” Pettit accused church leaders of making his investigators’ job more difficult. He noted a difficulty in locating the whereabouts of certain priests that the investigators were trying to interview. Pettit also said investigators were looking into more than 200 acts Wolk allegedly committed with one of the youths in Canada, Virginia, Florida and Ohio.

On June 30, 1994, Wolk requested that the Diocesan Bishop proceed with the formal process of seeking a dispensation from the obligations of priesthood.

On October 3, 2003, Diocesan officials met with a 37-year-old man about alleged abuse by Wolk in the mid-to-late 1980’s. The man said that as a teen he had worked in the rectory of St. Thomas Moore. He stated that on one occasion he was in the bathroom when Wolk entered. Wolk complained that he [Wolk] was in pain and needed to use the bathroom. He asked the teen if he would help him use the bathroom by holding his [Wolk’s] penis. The teen felt it was an odd request, but did so, viewing it as someone who needed help. On another occasion, Wolk gave the teen a massage. As the massage continued, the teen heard the sound of Wolk undoing his belt buckle. When the teen asked Wolk what he was doing, Wolk replied he was just loosening his belt to get comfortable. A little while later, Wolk told the teen he would be putting some lotion on his neck. Although the teen did not see any lotion, he felt Wolk put something wet over his neck. Wolk then took out a handkerchief and wiped off the excess. During the meeting, the victim told the Diocesan representatives that he wanted a face-to-face meeting with Wolk. The representatives explained to the victim that Wolk was no longer a priest. They suggested that the victim discuss the matter with his therapist.

Diocesan records also contained an October 18, 2017 “*Confidential Memorandum*” to the file. The memorandum memorialized a telephone call made to Sister Marilyn Welch, Victim Assistance Coordinator in the Altoona/Johnstown Diocese. In the memorandum, it was noted that an attorney had contacted the Diocese of Pittsburgh on behalf of his client. The attorney stated his client was accusing Father Francis Luddy and Wolk of abusing and molesting him. It was soon determined Luddy was a priest from the Altoona/Johnstown Diocese

On March 12, 2009, yet another adult male contacted the Diocese alleging abuse by Wolk. On March 17, 2009, this individual was interviewed by Diocesan representatives and he stated that he was abused by Wolk in 1968 to 1970 or 1971, while Wolk was assigned to St. Athanasius. The victim stated he was 14 to 17 years of age when the abuse took place. Some of the incidents occurred at the parish, while others occurred at a retreat house on Route 8. Through negotiations, the Diocese subsequently paid tuition for the victim’s children to attend Catholic schools in Allegheny County.

On September 9, 2010, the Diocese received a telephone call from Father Michael Yaksick of Midland. Yaksick reported that one of his parishioners came to him regarding sexual abuse that occurred during his childhood. This particular victim indicated that the priests

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involved in the abuse were Wolk and Father Leo Burchianti. (*See* narrative regarding Leonard Burchianti in this report for further information regarding sexual abuse allegations against him)

On September 14, 2010, Diocesan Assistance Coordinator Rita Flaherty conducted an interview of this victim. The victim told her he was now 44 years of age. He stated that when he was 12 years of age, Wolk took him to St. Vincent's in Westmoreland County for an overnight stay. While at the campus, Wolk allowed him to drive Wolk's car. He stated that this was pretty exciting, since he was only 12 years old at the time. He stated that during the overnight stay Wolk inappropriately touched him and performed oral sex on him. He also advised that several years later, when he was between 16 and 20 years of age, Burchianti cornered him in the sacristy and passionately kissed him, including putting his tongue "*down his throat.*"