

SNAP

Survivors Network *of those Abused by Priests*

New England Chapter
Phil Saviano, Regional Coord.

April 27, 1999

Dear friends and fellow members:

Happy Spring! I hope this finds you feeling optimistic and enjoying the warm, sunny days. I am writing to announce two upcoming meetings that I have scheduled at the **Morse Institute Library in Natick:**

Thursday, May 13, and Thursday, June 24; Both evenings 7 - 9 p.m.
Meetings are in the Community Meeting Room (in basement)
Library Phone: 508/651-7300

It's been a busy month. As you know, there was quite a bit of media coverage a few weeks ago regarding the parole hearing for Fr. James Porter. We hadn't discussed this at our previous meeting, but I felt it was important to send a statement to the Massachusetts Parole Board on behalf of the members of SNAP. So David Clohessy (the SNAP National Director) and I put together a letter and sent it off. I am enclosing a copy for you to see. Frank Fitzpatrick later told me that ours was one of some 60 other letters, all recommending that Fr. Porter not be released from prison.

A few days later, the Herald ran an interview with Fr. Porter from several years ago. It had never been published until now. I'm enclosing a copy, in case you missed it, but it's not a pleasant read. I found Porter's remarks to be very disturbing, especially his revelation that he had confessed his crimes to other priests, over and over again, week after week. It seems he never worried that one of his confessors would take steps to stop him. It also seems like he was always granted absolution. He had a twisted way of looking at his faith, to think that he could do whatever he wanted, to whomever, as long as he stopped by the confessional before the end of the week. I wonder how many other priests had the same outlook?

I've had several conversations with producers at ABC News 20/20 in recent weeks. They are considering doing a story on church-run treatment centers, like St. Luke Institute in Suitland Maryland. There are a number of such places, where priests who have molested children are sent. Of course the priest in my case, Fr. David Holley, was treated at four of these centers over the course of his long career, but 20/20 is looking for a more recent example, where a priest who was once in treatment is now still assigned to parish duty. So far, we've not been able to find one. If you can help, please give me a call.

In the past couple days, I have been working with reporters at the Dallas and Fort Worth newspapers about a priest, Fr. Philip Magaldi, who once served in the Providence diocese. Several years ago, he was transferred to the diocese of Ft. Worth. He's had quite a checkered past. In Providence, he served time in a prison work-release program after pleading guilty in 1992 for embezzling over \$120,000 in church funds. Prosecutors said he used some of the money for tropical vacations with teenage boys, and once gave a boy he had met in a park enough money to buy a car. In Texas, he was appointed associate pastor of a church outside Ft. Worth, and named chaplain of the diocesan Scouting program. Last summer, when news of his conviction was first revealed to parishioners in Texas, he received strong support from his bishop, and he vowed from the altar at Sunday mass that he would not leave his congregation. The trusting parishioners responded by giving him "a thunderous standing ovation."

Mail: SNAP, c/o Phil Saviano, 37 Oakview Terrace, Boston, MA 02130-4904
Phone: 617/983-5075 *E-Mail:* Wirebird@Mindspring.com

This past Sunday morning, the parishioners were greeted with more bad news. A 35 year old man from Massachusetts (whose identity has not yet been revealed) has now come forward to say that Fr. Magaldi molested him in Worcester during the 1970s. Until the matter can be resolved, Fr. Magaldi is retiring from all active ministry. To be fair, I should note that Fr. Magaldi insists that he has never met or had any contact with his accuser. . .

Here is an important announcement about our June 24 meeting:

I have invited a reporter from the Boston Herald to join us that evening. The reporter is Mark Mueller, and he will be there to listen and observe, with the possibility of writing a story about our group. Apart from our very first meeting two years ago, I have never allowed a reporter to attend, because I wanted members to feel that a SNAP meeting was place where they could speak in confidence. But now I think it would be good to open up ONE meeting to ONE reporter, as a way to let the general public know about our efforts to lend support to each other.

Although tens of thousands of young people have been sexually abused by Catholic clergy, there is no diocese, that I know of, that sponsors any sort of support group for victims. We've been left to figure it out on our own. For many people that I have heard from, SNAP has been tremendously helpful, and they have found a certain liberation and comfort in speaking about their experiences with other abuse survivors. At recent meetings, we have heard about how difficult it can be for someone in his or her 30s or 40s to finally come to grips with an experience that has been haunting them for decades. We've also heard stories about victims who have approached the church leaders directly, seeking compensation, or seeking only to warn others about a certain priest. Some have felt the response from their diocese has been helpful; some have left feeling re-victimized and more angry than before. I'd like to see some of these topics brought up in a news story. If you feel that church leaders have done a good job handling certain aspects of this issue, this would be a good way to get the news out. On the other hand, I think it's also important for the general public to know that Frs. Porter and Geoghan aren't the only priests who have molested kids in this region, and that for every victim that goes public and files a lawsuit, there are many more who are hurting and hidden in the shadows.

This past winter and spring, the Herald has given continued good coverage to the issue of clergy abuse. (Note Joe Fitzgerald's column, which I am also enclosing.) The reporter at our meeting will be abiding by certain pre-established rules. He may use quotes in his story, but he will not reveal anyone's name unless you give him permission. There will be no photographer present. I'm hoping for a good turnout at the June meeting. For those of you who are feeling all "SNAPed out," skip the May meeting, but try to join us in June! Feel free to call me or e-mail me if you have questions or comments about this story idea.

NOTE that my new e-mail address is: WIREBIRD@Mindspring.com. If you have an e-mail address of your own, please send it to me. It's a quick, inexpensive way to contact members if I see a news story or TV report you may be interested in.

LIBRARY DIRECTIONS: *Follow Route 27 South into downtown Natick.* At intersection of Route 27 and Route 135 (traffic lights), take left onto 135. The Morse Institute Library (brick building) is in the next block on the left. Parking is behind the library on Clarendon Street.

I hope to see you soon . . .

Phil Saviano