

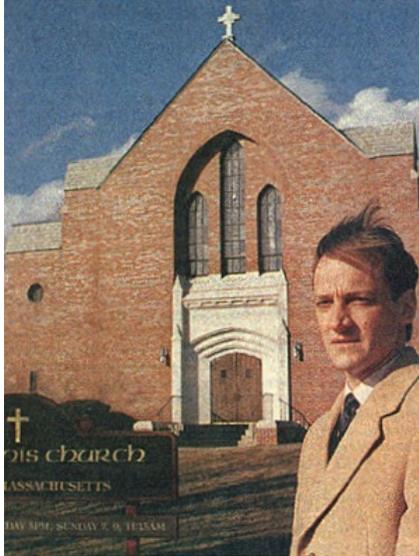
Catholic Crisis: Abuse by Priests

Extradition Ruling Due Today; Case Points to Problem of Pedophilia

By Patricia Edmonds
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[Note: This webpage was created from a copy of the original article in the Phil Saviano Archive. We thank him for his generosity. BA.org is solely responsible for this web posting.]

When Phil Saviano was 12, he says, the local Catholic priest in East Douglas, Mass., showed him pornography in the church choir loft, and made Saviano perform a sex act on him. That was 1964.



Charges Abuse: Phil Saviano stands in front of St. Denis Catholic Church in East Douglas, Mass., where he says he was sexually abused by the Rev. David Holley in 1964. By Lisa Bul, AP.

When Robert Curtis was 11, he says, the local Catholic priest in Alamogordo, N.M., gave him pornographic playing cards, and told him their shared sex acts were "a blessing from God." That was 1972.

In both cases, the accused priest is the Rev. David Holley, 65, who today could be ordered extradited to New Mexico on criminal sexual abuse charges.

The case against Holley - and similar cases against former Fall River, Mass., priest James Porter and dozens more priests nationwide - represents an unprecedented crisis of public confidence and personal faith for the 58 million-member U.S. Catholic church.

Cases claiming sexual abuse by priests already may have cost the church a half-billion dollars in court awards and hush-hush, out-of-court settlements. But the greater cost may come from "the level of trust Catholics feel" in church leaders, says Jason Berry, author of *Lead Us Not Into Temptation: Catholic Priests and the Sexual Abuse of Children*.

Perhaps the most devastating charge in the Holley case is that after church leaders learned Holley was abusing children in Massachusetts, they sent him to a church-run treatment program in New Mexico - where he allegedly abused again.

Today, Holley is in jail in Maryland. Church officials sent him to a sexual disorders treatment facility there after abuse charges first became public in December.

Neither Holley nor his attorney will comment on the charges awaiting him in New Mexico - criminal charges of sexually abusing eight boys, and a civil suit by 10 men claiming he abused them, all during the early 1970s.

Catholic directories say Holley, ordained in 1958, was "absent on sick leave" during the early '70s. But around 1971, Holley was sent to a New Mexico center for treatment of pedophilia.

Before Holley left Massachusetts, though, he served at several churches - including the East Douglas church Saviano attended.

Now 40 and living in Boston, Saviano recalls that contact with Holley "began very innocently."

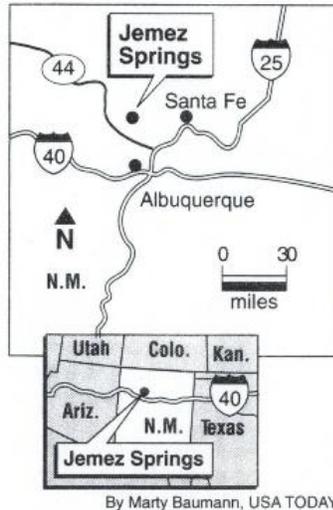
Holley would tell the parish boys funny stories and teach them card tricks. Over time, the stories acquired "an off-color slant. And one day, when he pulled out the deck of cards, they had pornographic pictures on them.

"By the time we knew we were in a troubling situation with this guy, it was hard to figure how to get out. I remember feeling trapped."

Saviano clearly remembers five sexual contacts with Holley - acts of masturbation and oral sex, sometimes with other children involved. In late 1965 when he learned Holley was leaving town, Saviano recalls, "it was a really happy day."

For 25 years, Saviano had "no idea whether Father Holley was alive, where he was - or whether he had been stopped." Then in December he read news of the civil suit filed against Holley in New Mexico.

In the 1960s and '70s, bishops often sent priests with problems - alcoholism, emotional disturbances, pedophilia - to a New Mexico treatment center run by the Servants of the Paracletes religious order.



The program consisted mostly of prayer and meditation, some counseling - and chances for priests to work in area parishes if they were thought to have improved, says Elinor Burkett, who is writing a book on child sexual abuse by priests.

Alan Konrad, attorney for the Paracletes, would not comment on Holley's case. But he said that since 1977, priests undergoing pedophilia treatment - maybe 3 or 4 of the center's 30-45 patients at any one time - are not released for parish work.



Hafermann: Now 28, he says he was sexually abused at age 8. [Photo by] Steve Voit.

Joe Hafermann says that change came too late: In 1974, when he was 8, Hafermann says Holley made him have oral sex in the sacristy at St. Jude Mission Church in Alamogordo. Hafermann, now 28 and a loan officer in Minneapolis, is part of the civil case against Holley.

Robert Curtis, 33, also attended St. Jude. Now the Albuquerque attorney is party to both the civil and criminal cases against Holley.

Curtis, too, remembers the pornographic cards. He remembers Holley telling parish boys "that as a priest, it was his job to teach us how to be men" through the sex acts. And he remembers the priest warning, "I have the authority as a priest to send you to hell if you ever tell."

But in the mid-'70s, someone did tell. A couple told St. Jude's pastor, the Rev. Wilfrid Diamond, that Holley had molested their son.

Diamond confronted Holley, who he said admitted the molestation. Diamond told *The Rocky Mountain News* that he reported Holley to the Paracletes - and Holley then was transferred to a parish in Texas.

Diamond said Holley seemed "kind of used to it, being moved from place to place" after being accused.

Holley subsequently worked in Texas and New Mexico parishes and left "victims up and down the Rio Grand Valley," says Bruce Pasternack, attorney in the civil case.

Holley moved into hospital chaplain work in the 1980s, last worked at a hospital in Denver and retired there in 1991, says Pasternack.

Pasternack calls it "astonishing" Worcester church officials "knew this man was a pedophile, and yet let him continue as a priest ... then sent him to the children and families of New Mexico without warning."

He predicts the Holley case could be "as big in terms of numbers of victims" as the case against former priest Porter, charged with molesting more than 100 children in the 1960s in Massachusetts, New Mexico and Minnesota.

Psychoanalyst Richard Sipe, a former priest who has studied priest pedophilia for 25 years, contends that about 6% of U.S. Catholic priests "at any one time are attracted to or involved with minors." While some have three victims and some have 250, Sipe says the average "priest-perpetrator has about 20-50 victims."

Thus, thousands of priests left tens of thousands of victims. Sipe predicts that the half-billion dollars the church already has paid to settle abuse cases is only the beginning.

Berry says that though Catholic leaders are "desperate" to retain and replenish the shrinking ranks of priests, they must more ruthlessly assess how offending priests are treated - and whether they should remain priests.

"How many children does a man have to abuse," Berry wonders, "before he's considered morally unfit to be a priest?"