

I, Michael McDonnell, was repeatedly sexually abused at ages 11-13 by Father Francis X. Trauger and Father John P. Schmeer. Trauger and Schmeer abused me when they were assigned by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to my family's parish, Saint Titus in Norristown, Pennsylvania. The abuse took place from 1980-1982 while I was in sixth and seventh grade at Saint Titus grade school and serving as an altar boy at the church. Both of my perpetrators were abusers known to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, which allowed them to utilize their position in the Archdiocese to prey on multiple children. Schmeer, who the Archdiocese kept as a priest and continued to support as he lives a life of "prayer and penance" was a resident priest at Saint Titus while teaching at Bishop Kenrick High School. Secular investigations have proven that abuse was the system.

Trauger, 78 years was now laicized 2003, faced charges and was convicted in July 2020 to 18 to 36 months in a state prison in addition to seven years' probation. Trauger last worked at St. Michael the Archangel in Tullytown Bucks County between 1993 and 2003, when the assaults happened. His charge was unrelated to my abuse by him in 1981 but I have been told by those most recent victims that my public media comments in 2018 prompted them to come forward.

Nothing in Traugers pattern to prey on children has ever changed, nor has how the Archdiocese handling.

Trauger was an assistant pastor at Saint Titus. Trauger was assigned to Saint Titus from June 1980 to September 1981. Both Schmeer and Trauger had sexually abused other children in the Archdiocese before abusing me. The Archdiocese maintained secret files on the allegations against both of these priests. In 1994, the Archdiocese identified Trauger in a memo listing priests who were the subject of sexual abuse allegations. Nothing was done about Trauger in response to this memo. In fact, despite multiple instances of abuse, Trauger was merely transferred and allowed to prey on more children. It wasn't until law enforcement began subpoenaing records of priest as part of the 2005 Philadelphia Grand Jury investigation that Trauger and Schmeer were finally removed from active ministry. Both Trauger and Schmeer were identified as abusers in the 2005 report issued by the Philadelphia Grand Jury.

his suggestions of her son being an altar boy, working at the rectory, or coming to New Jersey with him. Being victimized by a priest was being victimized by God's ordained agent. Because of this, I and so many others felt compelled to remain silent and accept the exploitation of priests like Schmeer.

B. Trauger

Like Schmeer, I first met Trauger while serving as an altar boy at Saint Titus. I, a seventh grader, was sexually abused by Trauger during a trip to Trauger's home in the Poconos in June 1981. Trauger insisted that I sleep with him in the only bed in the home. Trauger also ordered that I sleep in only underwear. When I protested, Trauger replied, "you are growing up, Mike." Trauger was a large man, known to have a quick and explosive temper. Fearing Trauger's temper, I complied. Before sleeping, Trauger asked me to rub Trauger's legs and back with lotion. Again fearful, I complied. I awoke to find my underwear was pulled down to the thighs, Trauger was rubbing my penis, and I don't know if I or Trauger had ejaculated. My anus was sore. I jumped from the bed and sat on the porch until morning. When Trauger came out from the bedroom, I told him that he was not feeling well and that he wanted to go home. He and Trauger did not speak of the incident. Driven by the shame brought on by the abuse, I did not say anything.

Shortly thereafter, however, the Archdiocese learned of Trauger's sexual abuse of kids at St. Titus. In August of 1981, shortly after Trauger assaulted me, two families reported to the pastor of Saint Titus that Fr. Trauger had molested their young sons, schoolmates of mine. Just like myself, both had been taken overnight to the Poconos and forced to sleep in bed with the priest.

Shockingly, Fr. Trauger admitted he had taken boys to the Poconos, slept in the same bed with them, and "massaged" them. Fr. Trauger also admitted that "two similar events occurred at his mountain home in the spring with two other boys from the parish," which would be consistent with the abuse of me. The Archdiocese, as was its practice, did not ask the identity of the two unnamed boys Trauger admitted to sleeping with in the Poconos. Trauger was instead, quietly transferred from St. Titus. There was no disclosure to the parish and no warning to others. As a result, I and other victims continued to suffer in silence and isolation for decades, letting

of shame and guilt I continue to experience has had a substantial effect on self-esteem, so much so that I contemplated suicide and sought crisis intervention from mental health providers for this suicidality on several occasions.

In 2010, I was convicted in this Commonwealth of theft by deception from the Archdiocese, which was driven from a sense of revenge for the abuse and the Archdiocese's continued refusal to provide some relief and compensate victims. (In contrast my bail was secured \$100,000 while my abuser was given unsecured \$250,000 bail and free to return to NY State) I have served a sentence of work release and serve probation associated with the charge. I continue to be responsible, remorseful, and accountable for my actions. I paid the Archdiocese restitution. In short, I committed to pay back the Archdiocese what I took from it. The Archdiocese, through its predatory priests who victimized me and its managers who ignored those perpetrators and facilitated the abuse, however, has taken much from me that has not been resolved. In 2020, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia petitioned the Common Pleas Court in Bucks County to vacate the order of restitution. I'm grateful for their actions and validation of the abuse I suffered, discovery allowed that to happen.

I have received significant mental health and substance abuse treatments over the past two decades related to the abuse.

In January 2005, I entered the Malvern Institute for Alcohol Dependency, participating in a rehab program. There, I received treatment related to his alcoholism and co-occurring mental health diagnosis. After discharge from the inpatient treatment on January 24, 2005, I lived in a recovery house and sober living in Levittown, Pennsylvania) for a year until February 2006.

In May 2010, I was voluntarily committed for inpatient psychiatric treatment at the Horsham Clinic for 15 days. I was noted to have a history of Major Depressive Disorder and PTSD. As an example of how the abuse tormented me despite the decades that had passed, I was described as depressed and suicidal on intake. At Horsham, I was diagnosed with PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Having flashbacks of the abuse by Trauger and Schmeer and I came to Horsham with suicidal thoughts of throwing himself

I urge you to place HB 1 SB1 on the fast track in order to provide our senate to act quickly as well. The actions you take today will allow victims will have full access to justice and open the window to ALL victims. Experts tell us that a window is constitutional. Since 2003, Grand jury reports, from investigations, into every Catholic diocese in the Commonwealth have recommended suspension or window legislation. Legislation for a statutory bill is the safest most eeffective way to identify todays predators that lurk among us. Communities will be safer when perpetrators are named, employers informed and victims begin to achieve validation. Alongside a statutory bill, a constitutional amendment process must stay on track identically in order to appear on November's election ballot. We must not forget that a standalone bill could be passed quickly in Harrisburg and signed immediately by our Governor. That is sending a message to victims who have been time barred from justice that they are being heard. It is sending a message to those who have retreated in silence so they will find the strength to step forward themselves and end their vicious cycle of pain. In many institutions across our commonwealth, abuse was not a sign of a failed system, abuse was the system. I respectfully ask that HB 1 and SB1 move forward to end this ongoing nightmare of injustice.

Michael William McDonnell 3/28/2023