

Father Richard D. Lynch

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1937
YEAR OF DEATH:	2000
ORDINATION:	May 5, 1963

Employment/Assignment History

6/01/1963 - 5/26/1972	Secondary Education Bradford Central Christian High School, Bradford, PA
5/26/1972 - 2/18/1983	Headmaster, Secondary Education Bradford Central Christian High School, Bradford, PA
2/18/1983 - 8/30/1999	Pastor, Erie Holy Rosary, Erie, PA
1984-1994	Dean, East Erie Deanery, Erie, PA
8/31/1999 – Death	Pastor, St. Mark's the Evangelist, Erie, PA

Summary

A memorandum located in the files from the Diocese of Erie - - apparently written by a secretary to Bishop Trautman - - stated that an individual called on July 26, 2004 and stated that he had called one month earlier and had spoken to a priest because the Bishop was unavailable on the subject of “*sexual involvement years ago.*” This caller stated that the priest told him that he would be contacted but nobody had returned his call to date. The caller also said that he was very upset about what had recently been written in the USA Today newspaper about an Erie Benedictine nun and that he had cut the article out and sent it to Cardinal Rigali.

In the Diocesan files the Grand Jury found a handwritten note that was titled with the above caller's name. The page appears to be a hand written notes from an interview with the caller/Victim #1. The Grand Jury read the notes to indicate the following:

[The victim] attended school and was a senior in 1978. He worked after hours at school and while he was cleaning the locker room, Father Richard Lynch touched him in a private area and later also pushed him against the wall. Another Father told Lynch not to touch [the victim].

On an undated official document from the Office of the Bishop, handwritten in ink, the writer states that Victim #1 came to see Monsignor Smith and Bishop Trautman regarding incidents of supposed abusive and aggressive behavior by Father Richard Lynch, the former Headmaster of the Bradford Central Christian High School. The document further states, “[Victim 1] claims Lynch slammed him into the wall and this resulted in a trauma for [Victim #1]. Father Grady had Lynch removed and Father Welter then came as Headmaster. (All of this transpired before I came to the Diocese)”. Victim #1 claimed he went to the doctor in April of 1979 and had to have back surgery at the Erie Metro Health Center. The note then states that

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“There are psychological issues present in [Victim #1], He receives money from Social Security because of DISABILITY” At the bottom of the document, the writer writes that Victim #1 is agitated, but that *“he usually calms down as you talk with him.”* There was also a form titled *“Advisory Statement for Report of Sexual Misconduct”* in the file, which was dated August 11, 2004 and signed by Victim #1. This form advises the signee that they have the right to report alleged sexual misconduct directly to the Office of District Attorney, that they have the right to seek an Attorney of their choice, and lastly that the Church representative would not give them legal advice.

On July 2, 2014, a letter was sent to Victim #1 from Father Gramata, who oversees the St. Bernard of Clairvaux Cemetery advising Victim #1 that he was in violation of several regulations regarding his parents burial plot in the cemetery and that he had fifteen days to resolve the violations. On September 06, 2014, Father Gramata sent a letter to Bishop Persico advising him that the Cemetery removed the items in violation at Victim #1’s parents’ plot and had them stored. In May of 2015, Father Gramata wrote a letter to Persico and included a letter that Gramata had received from Victim #1, who was incarcerated at this time in the Albion State Correctional Institution and was angry at the removal of the gravesite items.

Another letter sent to Gramata by Victim #1 in September of 2015 was forwarded to Bishop Persico. In this letter, Victim #1 again went on at length about his displeasure with the cemetery. He stated in this letter *“I didn’t fight the Church back in ‘79 when things happened to me in the high school.”*

Victim #1 sent letters to Bishop Persico from March through September of 2016. He was writing letters to the Bishop because he was very upset over treatment that he was receiving from two Catholic Deacons inside Albion Prison. Victim #1 did not think the Deacons were being fair or sufficiently nice to him.

In a letter dated June 3, 2016, Victim #1 stated that he wanted to write the Bishop to get some things off his chest. He alleged that Father Richard Lynch was responsible for the sexual abuse that he went through while attending Bradford Central Catholic Christian High School 1978-1979. Victim #1 stated that he told Bishop Trautman about some physical abuse but was too ashamed to talk about the sexual abuse. There is a hand written notation in black ink on top of the letter that said, *“Reported to District Attorney Daneri 7-28-2016”*

There is also a memorandum in the file, dated August 5, 2016 from Deacon DeCecco to Smith that states that DeCecco had not met with Victim #1 about any abuse issues before that date. It goes on to say that DeCecco met with Victim #1 for forty five minutes and he mostly wanted to talk about how poorly the Church is being administered. Victim #1 did say that he was abused by Lynch while a student at Bradford Central and also that Trautman was aware of it. The memorandum stated that Victim #1 was offered counseling from Trautman at the time and had turned it down, but that he would accept it now if offered.

Victim #1 said that he had told others that he had never been abused, but that was because he was ashamed and afraid to speak about it back then. Victim #1 also told Deacon DeCecco

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that he believed it was wrong to take money from God's House and that he would therefore not seek compensation.

On August 15, 2016, Victim #1 wrote another letter to Persico and stated that he had a talk with DeCecco in the prison and discussed with him some of his concerns. Victim #1 went on to say that the main issue that concerned him was what happened to him at the Bradford Catholic High School. Victim #1 then wrote, *"I want you to consider making me an offer Monetary to end this with me and get me some counseling. The Priest that did this is gone now but it will always be with me."* Victim #1 also referred to an incident in Altoona and reported that Bishop Barcheck now has a death on his shoulders. He wrote *"I would sign off on a check for \$20,000 to just close the books on this era. I'm trying to keep it quiet so this case never becomes public."* Victim #1 told the Bishop that he could just send the \$20,000 check to him at Camp Hill.

On September 6, 2016, Persico wrote back to Victim #1 and told him that he was very sorry to hear of his claim of sexual abuse and apologized. The letter went on to state,

Since Father Lynch is dead, the Diocese of Erie has nothing in its file regarding him sexually abusing students. This claim was never reported to the Diocese of Erie. I want you to know that I called the Erie County District Attorney's Office on July 25, 2016 to report the alleged sexual abuse. Also Child line was called on August 23, 2016 and the alleged abuse was reported to them. We want to help you in your healing process by offering counseling. The Diocese of Erie has a policy not to make monetary settlements. We are more concerned in the healing of victim survivors than by keeping the sexual abuse quiet. We need to know how the Diocese can assist in providing counseling while you are a resident of SCI Albion. Please let me know."

Victim #1 responded to Persico's letter on September 12, 2016. In his letter to the Bishop, Victim #1 asked the Bishop why he did not notify McKean County, where the abuse occurred. Victim #1 also told the Bishop to ask Smith why he or retired Bishop Trautman never reported it, since he came up there and met with both of them.

Victim #1 then said that the Bishop could check with DeCecco and he could help with setting up counseling for him in Albion. Victim #1 then said that what the Bishop could do for him is to help the Catholic parish of St. Bernard's in Bradford make the goal of refurbishing the Church and have the Diocese donate on Victim #1's behalf to the building fund.

There were no further allegations contained in this particular file from other persons against Father Lynch. Lynch died prior to the allegations being reported to the District Attorney's Office.