

# Reverend Lawrence F. Stebler

## Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1934
YEAR OF DEATH:	1997
ORDINATION:	May 4, 1963

## Employment/Assignment History

5/20/1963 – 8/27/1967	St. Hilary, Washington, PA
8/28/1967 – 11/30/1969	Our Lady of Fatima, Hopewell Township, PA
12/1/1969 – 6/13/1988	St. Stephen, Hazelwood, PA
6/14/1988 – 1/1/1996	St. Victor, Bairdford, PA
1/1/1996 – 6/17/1996	Leave of Absence
6/17/1996 – 6/9/1997	St. Theresa of Avila, Perrysville, PA

## Summary

The Diocese of Pittsburgh received a report from an adult male who recounted that when he was approximately eight to nine years of age, he was sexually abused by Father Stebler when Stebler was assigned to St. Hilary. He explained that his family was very close with Stebler and that when Stebler would visit their home, he would ask the boy's parents if he could tuck him into bed at night. The male provided a written statement where he stated:

*Once we would get to my room he would lay me down on the bed. He would then touch my head, eyes, chest, belly, waist and then lower than that. I remember not liking that and asking him what he was doing? He told me to lay quietly and not say anything. He said my mom and dad said it was OK and that he was blessing my organs."*

He reported that this abuse occurred for two or three years. The victim also noted that he did in fact previously disclose the abuse to two priests "*who basically told him not to discuss it further.*" The documents do not indicate the names of those two priests.

In a letter dated February 13, 2006, the victim's therapist wrote to the Diocese to document the "*severity of the mental health issues that the victim is struggling with as a result of being sexually abused by a priest as a child in the diocese of Pittsburgh.*" She further noted that:

*the sexual abuse has stunted the (male's) emotional development to the point where he cannot emotionally connect with others, which subsequently leads to severe depression . . . (male) also has a history of anxiety and panic attack, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as suicidal ideation...(male) has had two suicide attempts . . . (male) has flashbacks*

## **Summary**

*to the abuse in the form of dreams which is one of the criteria for diagnosing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD . . . he also experiences anxiety and panic attacks as well as a fear of being watched.*

Diocesan records contained invoices from, and payments made to, the Village of St. Joseph Counseling Services for therapy sessions. The Diocese paid a total amount of \$1,000. On September 20, 2006, in a letter to Bishop Paul Bradley, an attorney notified the Diocese that his firm was retained to represent the victim. There was no mention of any pending litigation made at this time.

On May 1, 2007, the attorney wrote a letter to the Diocese wherein he expressed his disappointment in not receiving a response to his September 20, 2006 letter. Based on the documents provided by the Diocese, it does not appear that a response was sent to the attorney