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Fr. John E. McGrath, Fr. Michael Skoblik, Fr. William Marks (l-r). Not pictured: Fr. Ramon Jerome Buckley.

Four Minnesota priests, alleged as sex abusers, named in three new civil lawsuits

Year-and-a-Half Investigation by Noaker Attorney Team Uncovers Perpetrators

(MINNEAPOLIS, October 2, 2014) – Attorneys on October 2, 2014 filed three new civil lawsuits against Catholic church officials on behalf of child sex-abuse survivors who broke their silence to step forward. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is named as a defendant in two cases; the Diocese of New Ulm is named as a defendant in two cases. One case shockingly alleges that two priests molested the same 12-year-old altar boy at Sacred Heart Parish in Robbinsdale.

Attorneys say that the cluster of cases filed October 2, 2014 is a result of more perpetrators being uncovered in their year-and-a-half long investigation into decades of clergy sex abuse -- prompting more victims to come forward.

“This is a sad chapter in Minnesota’s history that’s being told one victim at a time,” said Pat Noaker, Minneapolis lawyer and victim’s attorney. “As we piece together these cases, more information is coming to light.”

New victims have filed civil lawsuits since a new law was passed in May 2013 allowing victims age 24 or older a three-year window to sue for their past abuse.

Thursday’s cases revealed a new perpetrator previously not disclosed by church officials or named as a defendant in other cases: Father Ramon Jerome Buckley, of Sacred Heart Parish in Robbinsdale. Buckley is accused of abusing a 12-year-old altar boy in the late 1970s at church, in addition to Father John McGrath abusing the same boy. The alleged double-perpetrator abuse included forced oral sex by both priests and attempted anal rape by McGrath.

“The carnage from these cases is staggering,” said Leander Lee James, victim’s attorney and Noaker’s co-counsel. “The horror of a young boy being raped by two priests is almost unimaginable.”

“Based on past experience, we are only scratching the surface of what’s out there,” said Craig Vernon, victim’s attorney and Noaker’s co-counsel.

Sadly, one victim has died. Attorneys for the victim served his lawsuit upon the defendants the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis and The Diocese of new Ulm, however, the victim died just days before his lawsuit could be filed with the court. Attorneys say they're going forward with his case.

"We are saddened by his death," Noaker said of John Doe 114. "He was tormented by what happened, and we believe his life was cut short by his abuse. It's tragic that he spent the final days of his life fighting for justice."

John Doe 114 served in combat in Vietnam and also was a Vietnam prisoner of war. He was 65 years old.

Here's a look at the latest cases filed in Ramsey County's District Court, Second District:

- **John Doe 114 (now deceased), abused by Father William J. Marks at St. John's Catholic Church, Hector, MN.** John Doe 114 was 10 years old when he moved to Hector, MN in 1959 with his parents and six siblings. The boy's family was poor. His father worked at a gas station, and his mother worked as a waitress. The family was not Catholic. To earn money, John Doe 114 mowed lawns and delivered newspapers to St. John's, located near the boy's home. Unfortunately, John Doe 114 did not know that he had crossed paths with a notorious sexual predator -- Fr. William Marks, who had molested other boys. For two years, Fr. Marks forced John Doe 114 to masturbate and perform oral sex on Marks in the church's rectory, court papers say. Marks also attempted to anally rape the boy. This is Mark's third victim -- and second non-Catholic boy -- in recent weeks to file a lawsuit alleging sexual abuse by Marks. Marks was employed by the Archdiocese and the Diocese of New Ulm from 1948 to 1979. In the early 1990s, four men previously filed suit against Marks for sexual abuse. (Documents available on website at www.noakerlaw.com)
- **John Doe 115, abused by Fr. Ramon Jerome Buckley, Fr. John McGrath, at Sacred Heart Parish in Robbinsdale, MN.** John Doe 115 was raised in a devout Catholic family, regularly attended mass and served as an altar boy at Sacred Heart Parish. Between 1978-1979, when John Doe 115 was approximately 12-14 years old, Fr. Buckley sexually assaulted the boy at the church's parish office. The abuse included forcibly touching the boy's genitals and performing oral sex. Between 1978-1980, when John Doe 115 was approximately 13-15 years old, Fr. McGrath sexually assaulted the boy by forcibly touching his genitals, performing oral sex and attempting to anally rape the boy, while in the parish rectory.
- **John Doe 116 abused by Fr. Michael Skoblik, at Church of St. Joseph, Silver Lake.** John Doe 116 was about 10 or 11 years old in 1962 when he was a student attending Church of St. Joseph. About this same time, Fr. Skoblik sexually abused the boy. (Skoblik was employed by the Diocese of New Ulm from 1940-1989.) The abuse included forcibly touching the boy's genitals, performing oral sex on the boy, forcing the boy to perform oral sex on Fr. Skoblik, performing violent and masochistic acts upon the boy and threatening violence if the boy refused to comply with Skoblik's demands.

Fr. William J. Marks:

1936; Ordained, then assigned to St. Mark, Shakopee; St. Dominic Northfield; Guardian Angels, Hastings; Immaculate Conception, Faribault; then Parish administration; Our Lady, Manannah; St. Phillip, Litchfield.

1945: assigned to St. Dionysus, Tyler

1954: assigned to St. John's, Hector

1962: assigned to St. Clotilde, Green Valley

Fr. Michael G. Skoblik:

1940-1946: Holy Redeemer, Montgomery

1947: Most Holy Trinity, Veseli
1948: Immaculate Conception, Lonsdale
1949-1952: St. Mary's, Bechyn
1953-1966: St. George, Glencoe
1967-1989: Church of St. Joseph, Silver Lake

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Plaintiffs' attorneys:

James, Noaker and Vernon are veteran sex-abuse attorneys who successfully have represented hundreds of victims across the country. They teamed up last year to help child sexual-abuse survivors under Minnesota's new law allowing victims previously barred by statutes of limitation to bring forth claims and hold institutions accountable. They have pooled their resources, experience and legal staff to take on powerful institutions, believing they could do more together than they could as individual attorneys.

Patrick Noaker of Noaker Law Office is an attorney with 23 years' experience, who has successfully represented hundreds of sex-abuse victims across the country against various religious entities. Minnesota Super Lawyers identifies him among the top attorneys in Minnesota.

Leander James is a longtime attorney with a nationwide practice. James has helped bring about institutional change for the protection of children and secured hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements and verdicts for abuse victims in cases against Catholic dioceses and other religious organizations. James, together with his partner Craig Vernon, currently represent nearly 300 abuse survivors in a case against the Diocese of Helena, Montana. James also represented nearly 500 abuse victim in a Jesuit bankruptcy case in Portland, Oregon. James is managing partner at James Vernon and Weeks with offices in Seattle and in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Craig Vernon has more than 20 years courtroom experience as an attorney. Raised Mormon, Vernon has represented Mormons and people of other faiths who have been sexually abused in the church. Vernon has successfully secured multi-million dollar settlements and verdicts and has worked on high-profile, class-action type sex-abuse cases across the country. Vernon is a law partner at James Vernon & Weeks in Seattle and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

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