

RAYMOND LAFERRIERE

I. INTRODUCTION

The Task Force investigated whether the Diocese of Manchester endangered the welfare of children by failing to effectively respond to concerns regarding Father Raymond Laferriere. The State would not have charged the Diocese in this instance. It appears that the Diocese received a complaint regarding Laferriere in the early 1960's when he was assigned to St. Augustine's in Manchester. The complainant alleged that Laferriere invited two boys from Central High School to his rectory room where he had pornographic material on the walls. However, it does not appear that the Diocese had any information that Laferriere made sexual advances toward these or any other minors. In 1995, John Doe LXXX came forward to report to the Diocese that Laferriere sexually assaulted him on several occasions when he served as an altar boy at St. Patrick's in Milford. Laferriere was assigned to St. Patrick's from October of 1968 to June of 1970. Faced with these facts, there were two significant obstacles facing any potential case against the Diocese. First, it is not clear that the Diocese was aware that Laferriere was a sexual threat to minors based on the complaint they received in the early 1960's. Next, the child endangerment statute was not enacted in New Hampshire until 1973. Thus, the conduct of the Diocese prior to 1973 must be considered in light of the criminal law in place at the time -- the offense of contributing to the delinquency of minors. Given the elements of this offense, the State does not believe that there is a viable argument to toll the statute of limitations in this instance.

The State's investigation found the following facts.

Laferriere attended St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore Maryland. (B6201). While he was there, he requested "psychiatric attention" due to his "nervousness" and "tension." (B6201). Accordingly, Father Eugene Van Antwerp, the Rector at the seminary referred Laferriere to Dr. Frank Ayd, a local Catholic psychiatrist. (B6204). Father Van Antwerp wrote a letter to Bishop Brady on May 8, 1959, discussing the situation. According to the letter, Dr. Ayd made a preliminary diagnosis that Laferriere suffered from "incipient schizophrenia with homosexual overtones." (B6201). Father Van Antwerp stated that "[t]he doctor's worry is that he feels that the schizophrenia will break down the control this young man has over his homosexual tendencies and that this could occur quickly." (B6201). In light of these concerns, Father Van Antwerp recommended that the Diocese postpone Laferriere's ordination and offered to care for Laferriere for the summer so that he could continue treatment with Dr. Ayd. (B6201). Bishop Brady accepted this recommendation and permitted Laferriere to stay the summer. (B6200). Father Van Antwerp drafted a letter to Monsignor Hansberry on December 3, 1959, stating that "[Laferriere] seems in fine shape and really ready for ordination whenever the Bishop should decide. The psychiatrist now has come around to this point of view and feels that his difficulties are pretty well cleared up." (B6210). On April 11, 1960, Dr. Ayd wrote to Bishop Primeau that "I can find no impediment to his ordination." (B6218).

Laferriere was ordained in May of 1960. (B1038). He served in various New Hampshire parishes until his retirement in 1995. (B1038). In November of 1960, the Diocese assigned him to St. Augustine's in Manchester. (B1038).

On September 11, 2002, the Task Force received a complaint from John Doe LXXIX regarding Laferriere. Doe LXXIX reported that Laferriere sexually assaulted him between approximately 1957 to 1958 when he was 11 or 12 years old. (B6281). At the time, Doe LXXIX explained that he was a student at St. Augustine's Parish in Manchester. (B6281). Diocesan records indicate that Laferriere served at St. Augustine's from November 18, 1960 until he took a leave of absence for health reasons on December 23, 1963. (B1038). Doe LXXIX alleged that Laferriere offered to teach him to drive even though he wasn't old enough to do so. (B6281). Doe LXXIX agreed. The first time that they went for a drive, Laferriere put his hand on Doe LXXIX's genitals. (B6281). On a subsequent occasion, Laferriere did the same thing. (B6281). The second time that the same conduct occurred, Doe LXXIX told his mother. She told Doe LXXIX that she planned on reporting Laferriere's conduct to another priest, but Doe LXXIX does not believe that she ever did. (B6281). There is no indication in the Diocesan files that the Diocese was aware of this conduct by Laferriere.

There is an undated letter directed to Bishop Primeau complaining about Laferriere's conduct during his assignment to St. Augustine's. (B569). The letter alleges that Laferriere invited two boys from Central High School to his rectory room where Laferriere had pornographic pictures. (B569). There is no other evidence available regarding this issue. In particular, there is no indication that Laferriere posed an overt threat to children at that time.

On May 8, 1995, John Doe LXXX drafted a letter directly to Laferriere, which is included in the Diocesan file, accusing Laferriere of "sexually molest[ing] him on many occasions" when he was a "young boy." (B565). Doe LXXX intimated that these encounters occurred "not only in Milford but in Colebrook, at the Seacoast, in your car, in the church and so on." (B566). Doe LXXX's letter also suggests that his father had previously reported the matter to the church. (B566). Diocesan records state that Laferriere served at St. Patrick's church in Milford from October 4, 1968 to June of 1970. (B6119; 1038).

Thereafter, Doe LXXX approached the Diocese, through his attorney. Ultimately, Doe LXXX settled his claim against the Diocese for \$25,000. (B557). This settlement included an agreement that both parties keep Doe LXXX's claims confidential. (B557). The settlement also included a "General Release" in which Doe LXXX agreed to release both the Diocese and Laferriere from any future claims.

Task Force investigators located Doe LXXX and corresponded with him via email regarding Laferriere's abuse. (B7051; 7073). He confirmed that Laferriere assaulted him when he was serving as an altar boy at St. Patrick's in Milford. (B7073).¹

¹ Doe LXXX indicated that the abuse began in 1964, when he was 8 years old. (B7073). However, Laferriere was not assigned to St. Patrick's in Milford until 1968 when Doe LXXX was 12.

Doe LXXX explained that Laferriere attempted to perform fellatio on him, Laferriere fondled his genitals and he touched Laferriere's genitals. (B7073). According to Doe LXXX, his father found out about the abuse and spoke to the Diocese of Manchester. (B7073). Soon thereafter, Doe LXXX's father died. Doe LXXX explained that Laferriere told him that his father died because Doe LXXX's father reported the abuse. (B7073).

There is an undated, hard to read, handwritten note in the Diocesan file relating to sexual misconduct committed by Laferriere as a priest. (B570). The note indicates the following.

It never happened after 1971 or 1972 when Laferriere began to receive treatment. In 1968, he was an administrator in Milford and "began" with a 13 or 14 year old altar server. The "kid" unzipped his fly, permitting Laferriere to fondle his genitals. Within a year, this conduct stopped.

He did the same kind of things with 2 or 3 kids at St. Jeans. After that, nothing in any of other the assignments.

(B570). While it is not entirely clear, this note was likely written after 1995, when the Diocese undertook some basic investigation into Laferriere's background after receiving the complaint from Doe LXXX.

II. CONCLUSION

In addition to the investigation discussed above the State conducted grand jury investigation with respect to the Diocesan response to Laferriere's conduct. The State cannot release information relating to this aspect of the investigation because the witness(es) have not consented to the release of information. For the reasons stated above, the complete investigation revealed no evidence to support charges against the Diocese.