

Reverend Leo Burchianti

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1939
YEAR OF DEATH:	2013
ORDINATION:	1964

Employment/Assignment History

5/27/1964-8/21/1966	St. Joseph, Natrona, PA
8/22/1966-6/09/1968	Immaculate Conception, Bloomfield, PA
6/10/1968-5/21/1973	Our Lady of Grace, Scott Township, PA
5/22/1973-1/24/1979	St. James, Sewickley, PA
1/25/1979-11/21/1980	St. Philip Neri, Donora, PA
11/22/1980-2/12/1981	Leave of Absence, health reasons
2/13/1981-12/03/1981	St. Rosalia, Greenfield, PA
12/04/1981-4/12/1993	St. Joseph, West Aliquippa, PA
4/12/1993-1/30/1995	Leave of Absence, health reasons/administrative
1/30/1995	Retired
1/31/2003	Withdrew from ministry

Summary

Records subpoenaed from the Diocese of Pittsburgh, including a confidential memorandum dated May 10, 2012, medical records, and victim files, reflected that from approximately 1967 to 1993, Father Leo Burchianti was alleged to have had inappropriate contact with at least eight young boys. These allegations included but were not limited to Burchianti: having anal or oral sex with them; inappropriately touching them; making suggestive comments to them; providing alcohol to them; allowing them to use drugs in the rectory; and inviting some to stay overnight to sleep in his bed with him.

In February/March 1979, a minor boy was asked by Burchianti to go over to the parish house by himself. While there, the boy was given alcohol by Burchianti and told by Burchianti that “he gets very horny after one beer.” Burchianti also stated, “*Love the one you’re with, if you’re not with the one you love, and since you are not with the one you love (your girlfriend), he should love the one he was with.*” Burchianti then dimmed the lights in the room. A fuse then blew and the boy used this opportunity to leave the room very quickly. As he was leaving, he received the impression that Burchianti was going to kiss him, but Burchianti did not.

In the summer of 1979, another minor boy was given alcohol by Burchianti and on two distinct occasions, was told by Burchianti that he “*wanted to rape*” the boy. In September 1979, while the boy was at the rectory doing work for Burchianti, Burchianti attempted to go into the bathroom with the boy. He later placed his hand under the elastic in the boy’s shorts. When he

Summary

told Burchianti not to tickle him, Burchianti responded, *"I'm not trying to tickle you, I'm trying to grab for something."* The boy quickly left.

In January 1980, another minor boy was having personal issues and was persuaded to talk to his parish priest. It was agreed that he would talk to Burchianti and spend the night at the rectory with him. While in Burchianti's room, he saw a picture of a young boy, approximately 17 years old. Burchianti pointed to the picture and said, *"You see that young boy, he is making \$20.00 to \$25.00 a hit and you could be too."* Burchianti then stated that he had pornographic films and he could show them to the boy. As they both got ready for bed and undressed to their underwear, Burchianti sat next to the boy on the bed and grabbed at the boy's genital area. The boy hit Burchianti and Burchianti made the boy promise to not tell his mother. The boy then got into the bed and Burchianti got in beside him. The boy immediately got out of the bed and slept on the couch. The next morning, Burchianti asked the boy if it would help him if Burchianti made love to him. The boy, in response, twisted Burchianti's arm behind his back and told him not to try anything ever again.

On several unknown occasions in 1979/1980, another minor boy was involved in a number of incidents with Burchianti. On one occasion, Burchianti offered to watch *"films"* of guys or girls with him, but Burchianti noted that he preferred to watch guys. On another occasion, Burchianti stated *"you could have just as much fun with a man as with a woman"* and then asked the boy, *"you mean to tell me you wouldn't take a blowjob from a guy?"* Burchianti then told the boy that he would like to kiss him. On another occasion, Burchianti told the boy that he was his *"secret admirer"* and that he *"wanted to rape him."* The boy reported that Burchianti provided him alcohol several times.

In the early 1980s, a 12-year-old boy alleged that he was kissed and groped numerous times by Burchianti, while Burchianti was assigned to St. Joseph.

It should be noted that on October 26, 1980, Burchianti admitted to all of these allegations except the *"ones concerning abuse."*

In 1985, a mother of a minor boy informed Father Nicholas Dattilo that Burchianti had made sexual advances toward her son in 1977. Burchianti reportedly told her son that they should go to bed together. The boy told his mother about this incident in 1982.

In November 28, 1990, a 30-year-old adult male (hereinafter referred to as John Doe 1) confronted Burchianti at his home about being sexually abused by him when the male was 14 years old. John Doe 1 was encouraged by his therapist to meet with Burchianti to obtain closure and so that he could be assured that Burchianti was receiving therapy for his *"problem."* Burchianti assured John Doe 1 that he was receiving therapy. According to John Doe 1, the sexual abuse included Burchianti providing and receiving oral sex from him for a period of a year and a half starting in approximately 1974. During this time, Burchianti was assigned to St. Joseph.

Summary

On November 29, 1990, Father Theodore Rutkowski included a handwritten letter in Burchianti's file. That letter concerned his conversation with Burchianti about Burchianti's meeting with John Doe 1 the night before. Rutkowski stated at the end of his letter that:

Besides the usual assurances of our support, I advised . . . Burchianti that, legally, the statute of limitations had long since expired and that he should direct all contact from [John Doe 1's] family to me [Rutkowski]."

Nothing more was done at the time.

On April 6, 1993, then-Father David Zubik and Father Robert Guay met with another victim (hereinafter referred to as John Doe 2) who stated that from the ages of 13/14 (from approximately 1976 or 1977) to age 21, he had engaged in oral and anal sex with Burchianti. John Doe 2 was initially referred to Burchianti by his father to discuss John Doe 2 having been being sodomized by another young boy. John Doe 2 stated that the abuse with Burchianti occurred approximately 200-300 times while Burchianti was assigned to St. Philip's in Donora and then approximately 20-30 times while Burchianti was at St. Joseph. John Doe 2 stated that he was coming forward now with the allegations because he saw Burchianti recently and it caused these memories to resurface.

On April 12, 1993, Zubik and Guay met with Burchianti to inform Burchianti of the allegations made by John Doe 2. Burchianti admitted to having had a sexual relationship with him over the years, but disputed the number of times it occurred. As a result of the meeting, Burchianti resigned as pastor of St. Joseph, effective immediately and then requested a leave of absence for health reasons. On April 13, 1993, Burchianti was admitted to St. Francis Hospital. On May 6, 1993, Burchianti was admitted to St. Michael's for assessment and treatment

Ultimately, on March 18, 1994, a signed settlement agreement for \$15,000 was reached between the Diocese and John Doe 2.

On April 16, 1994, Burchianti asked the Assessment Board and Clergy Task Force to consider his request for reassignment. On August 29, 1994, the report of the Ministerial Assessment Board unanimously recommended that Burchianti not be given any assignment in the diocese. On September 22, 1994, Burchianti asked Bishop Wuerl to be reassigned somewhere within the diocese. On September 29, 1994, Bishop Wuerl informed Burchianti that given the recommendation of both the Assessment Board and the Clergy Task Force, his request would not be granted and no assignment would be given to him. On October 18, 1994, Burchianti requested early retirement "for reasons of health," which was ultimately approved.

On October 27, 1994, Zubik sent a letter to Bishop Donald Wuerl which referred to "Retirement Request: Reverend Leo R. Burchianti" The letter stated:

Attached you will find a draft letter granting Father Leo Burchianti early retirement from active ministry for reasons of health. I purposely did not indicate any reference to the possible arrangements for his work with the retired priests

Summary

at St. John Vianney Manor nor his residence there. In light of the recommendation made by the Assessment Board, I feared this might appear to be an assignment. Because I indicated a reference in the letter to being in contact with me, I feel it would be better to work out the details of his work and residence at St. John Vianney with both Father Burchianti and Sister Joyce. If you feel the letter needs to be more explicit in this regard, I will make the appropriate changes.

Burchianti began residing at St. John Vianney Manor on February 1, 1995 and remained there until at least 2012.

On January 16, 2003, Father Young wrote to Burchianti, informing him that with the publication of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, and with the approval by the Holy See of the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, he was being permanently removed from ecclesiastical ministry. Young also told Burchianti, “*Given this significant development, I would ask that you write Bishop Wuerl indicating that you are withdrawing from priestly ministry.*”

On September 21, 2007, John Doe 1 met with Rita Flaherty, Diocesan Assistance Coordinator, regarding the sexual abuse he endured by Burchianti, which was discussed above. He told Flaherty of the sexual abuse that occurred when he was in seventh and eighth grades and that these assaults occurred in the rectory, in Burchianti’s room and car. Joe Doe 1 also recalled being taken to the seminary pool during this time frame, where he would see other boys from his class. These boys came to the pool with Father Bob Castelucci and Father Rudy Smoley, friends of Burchianti. He stated that the “priests would make statements to each other, bragging about the boy that each of them brought.”

On September 25, 2007, Father David Bonnar, Father John Rushofsky and Flaherty, met with Burchianti to discuss the allegations. During this meeting, Burchianti admitted to sexual contact with John Doe 1 and “*wished he could erase his past.*” Burchianti also admitted to being “*sexually involved with [John Doe 1’s] mother for 6-8 months*” and that he along with Castelucci and Smoley, would take young boys to the seminary pool and brag to one another about them.

On June 10, 2008, the Diocese provided John Doe 1 with for \$24,000 for counseling he was receiving as a result of this abuse.

During his tenure as a priest, Burchianti appears to have been evaluated and treated at St. Luke’s and/or St. Michael’s Institute on at least three separate occasions in 1989, 1993 and 2012 for “*inappropriate relationships with male minors.*” Burchianti died in 2013.