

March 21, 1995

Do You Remember Father Birmingham?

Please Contact Me At: KJC
111 E. 14th St. Suite 189
New York, NY 10003

Thank you for responding to my ad about Father Birmingham. I placed the ad in an effort to find people who remembered Father Birmingham and who could help me. When Father Birmingham came to St. James parish in Salem, Massachusetts in 1964, I was an altar boy there. Father Birmingham quickly befriended the altar boys and other boys in the parish, and took us on trips to the movies, skiing, etc. He was also involved in the parish CYO. I was glad to have a priest who paid so much attention to me and my friends.

Then things changed. Starting in 1965, I was sexually molested by Father Birmingham on numerous occasions. Feeling instantly ashamed, I kept this fact a secret, and only recently have begun to seek help in dealing with the many repercussions of those events. For close to 30 years, I blamed myself for what happened, unable to step out of the fear I experienced as a teenager. Now that I am looking at the experience as an adult, I realize that I was not to blame. Rather, Father Birmingham, an adult in a very powerful position, took advantage of a trusting boy who came to him as his confessor. He used my faith in him as a holy man and my belief in the sanctity of the confessional to lure me into his perversion, traumatizing me in the process in a way that has taken me 30 years to begin to find the strength to overcome.

For all the years that I was silent, one of the greatest pains that I felt was thinking that I was alone, the only person Father Birmingham molested. I now realize that it is unlikely that I was his only victim. I feel a need to speak with others who may have had the same thing happen to them, so that we may be able to help each other in the healing process. I understand that Father Birmingham served as a parish priest at St. Columbkille's in Brighton from 1979 through 1985, so I placed an ad in the Allston-Brighton Journal to see if I could make contact with anyone who knew him there.

I am happy to hear that your interaction with Fr. Birmingham was positive, and can only hope that he was the exception to the rule who was able to change his abusive ways. I am sorry for any disturbance that this letter may cause you, but I believe that continuing to maintain the silence that often surrounds sexual abuse damages and endangers us all.

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