

Reverend William J. Shields

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1929
YEAR OF DEATH:	2000
ORDINATION:	March 15, 1958

Employment/Assignment History

5/29/1958 – 5/27/1960	Assistant, St. Ambrose, Schuylkill Haven, PA
5/27/1960 – 2/23/1962	Assistant, St. John Baptist de la Salle, Shillington, PA
2/23/1962 – 9/4/1962	Assistant, St. Mary, Hamburg, PA
9/4/1962 – 10/30/1964	Assistant, Annunciation B.V.M., Shenandoah, PA
10/30/1964 – 12/9/1966	Regional Director, Bishop's Relief, Upper Schuylkill County, PA
12/9/1966 – 11/29/1967	Bishop's Relief Agency, East Schuylkill County, PA
11/29/1967 – 8/30/1968	Assistant, St. Paul, Allentown, PA
8/30/1968 – 3/27/1969	Assistant, St. Lawrence, Catasauqua, PA
3/27/1969 – 3/8/1972	Administrator, St. Ann, Lansford, PA
3/8/1972 – 1/11/1974	Assistant, St. Peter, Reading, PA
1/11/1974 – 6/15/1995	Pastor, St. Nicholas, Weatherly, PA
6/15/1995 – 8/28/2000	Pastor Emeritus, St. Nicholas, Weatherly, PA

Summary

In April 2002, a victim reported that he had been sexually abused by Father William J. Shields. The victim reported that the abuse occurred when he was approximately 12 or 13 years old in the rectory of St. Ann's in Lansford. After a night of working a parish picnic, the victim and the victim's friend helped Shields take money back to the rectory. Shields told the victim's friend that he could leave but that the victim should stay at the rectory. At the time of the abuse, the victim revered priests and the Catholic Church and "*did not know how to say no to a priest or nun.*" Shields asked the victim sit in the television room and lay down on the couch because Shields wanted to give him a massage. Shields began by massaging the victim's shoulders and working his way down to the victim's waistline. Shields unbuttoned the victim's pants and began fondling the victim's genitals. Shields then made the victim stand up as Shields knelt in front of the victim and began removing the victim's pants and underwear. At this point the victim had the courage to stop Shields and tell Shields he had to leave. As the victim was getting ready to leave, Shields told the victim, "*Let this be our little secret.*"

The victim went home and told his mother what had happened. The victim's mother advised him not to tell anyone of the incident and to stay away from Shields. The victim believed his mother was worried that, if the incident was reported, the victim could be stigmatized if others in the parish knew about it. The victim told a deacon who worked at the parish and with whom the victim was close at the time about the incident. The victim reported that about three months after the abuse occurred Shields announced at mass that he was being

Summary

transferred to another parish. The victim believed the deacon reported the incident to someone in the Diocese, resulting in Shields' transfer. Records provided by the Diocese indicate Shields was transferred to St. Peter's in Reading and then St. Nicholas' in Weatherly. Shields remained at St. Nicholas' until his death in 2000.

In March 2004, a second victim called the Diocese and reported that he had been sexually abused by Shields at St. Ann's parish 25 to 30 years prior. The second victim did not give any further details off the sexual abuse. The second victim only wanted to report he was abused by Shields and wanted no counseling or compensation in return. Records indicated that the Diocese contacted the Carbon County District Attorney's Office about the second victim's report of abuse.