

Reverend Carl J. Steffen

Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1930
YEAR OF DEATH:	2015
ORDINATION:	May 15, 1958

Employment/Assignment History

6/29/1958-4/09/1959	Assumption Blessed Virgin Mary, Lancaster, PA
5/24/1960	Assistant Director of Youth for Boy Scouts
4/09/1959-6/02/1961	St. Gertrude, Lebanon, PA
6/02/1961-8/09/1963	St. Joan of Arc, Hershey, PA
8/09/1963-6/02/1967	Bishop McDevitt High School, Harrisburg, PA
8/09/1963-6/18/1969	St. Joseph, Shamokin, PA
6/02/1967	Local Director, Shamokin Office Catholic Charities
7/01/1969	Chaplain to the Newman Apostolate for Gettysburg College
1969	“Temporary leave for retreat work,” Gettysburg for weekends
6/18/1969-5/06/1976	St. Francis Xavier, Gettysburg, PA
1/13/1972	Permission reaffirmed for Retreat Apostolate
4/18/1978-2005 (retired)	St. Ignatius Loyola, Buchanan Valley, PA

Summary

According to the Diocese of Harrisburg’s file, Diocesan officials learned of sexual abuse allegations against Father Carl J. Steffen. The first allegation the Diocese knew about was in May 1966 when Steffen was a Chaplain at a local high school. Father Joseph Hilbert of St. Francis of Assis wrote a report that stated that Bishop Joseph Daley had been briefed on the accusations. The following information was obtained from a report written on January 11, 1967. The report begins with “*several complaints from reputable parents*” regarding Father Steffen’s “*questionable procedures during interviews of high school boys.*” “*He was alleged to fondle, caress and touch them.*” Daley ordered Hilbert to speak with Steffen. Hilbert stated Steffen was in a cold sweat at the end of the interview. Steffen stated that sometimes he sat on a couch with the boys and gave them a “*gesture of friendliness.*” Hilbert gave Steffen the following commands:

- 1) He cannot use his couch for counseling, but must always have a desk between himself and a student;
- 2) Discontinue all face to face confessions “*which he had continued in spite of an explicit warning from Father Shaull during the middle of the year*”;
- 3) He must cease touches and friendly embraces;

Summary

4) Confessions were never to be held outside of the confessional;

Diocesan documents revealed that additional individuals also complained of Steffen's conduct. He went to high school football practices and patted the boys on their back; Steffen also showed the same signs of affection reported in May of 1966. Hilbert stated, "*I immediately informed Father Steffen that the boys were misinterpreting his signs of friendliness.*" A female student reported that Steffen spoke to her about masturbation, intercourse and "*certain aberrations of the marital act.*" Parents of three other students reported to Hilbert that Steffen gave children "*purity talks.*" Steffen was not removed from his position as Chaplain at the high school until May of 1969.

In 1993, Diocesan documents noted more accusations leveled against Steffen. The victim stated in high school Steffen asked him about the size of his penis and discussed masturbation. In 1997, a deacon reported to Hilbert a family left the parish because Steffen asked their three sons about sex.

In July 2002, the Diocese asked a psychologist to interview the victim from 1993 (who also made another report in 2002). He stated in 1968, when he was 10 years old, he had his appendix removed. Steffen went to the hospital and touched his genital area over top of the bed sheets. The victim stated Steffen discussed masturbation and climaxing. The psychologist wrote to the Diocese, "*a case could readily be made that the priest in question was taking a parental role in educating these boys to their evolving sexuality.*" She stated in her report, "that it may be expedient for the priest in question to take early retirement." (underlined in report).

In September 2002, Bishop Dattilo issued a Decree, which provided, "*insufficient evidence exists to suggest that an offense has been committed which is deserving of a penalty. Father Steffen's offense seems to have been a violation of prudence rather than an overt offense of sexual misconduct or abuse.*"

Finally, in 2003, a penal precept was issued warning Steffen of his actions. In February of 2009, Steffen had the faculty for hearing confessions revoked for "*consistent pattern of inappropriate sexual questioning within the sacrament of penance.*"