

Background: The Dallas Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth, as promulgated by the Catholic bishops of the United States in 2002, is a response to the historical phenomenon of sexual abuse of children by Catholic clergy. Among its statutory bylaws are provisions to “bind up the wounds caused by every breach of trust” (Art. 1), comply with civil and statutory laws (Art. 3), engage in a prompt, objective canonical investigation (Art. 6), support investigations by civil authorities (Art. 11), and ensure the appropriate formation of future priests (Art. 17). Its purpose is to definitively “meet and resolve this crisis for now and the future.”

My Communication: On multiple occasions I informed Erie Diocesan authorities of three sexual predators operating in or on behalf of the diocese who have victimized children and vulnerable adults.

1. I am a survivor of repeated priest sexual abuse which occurred when I was a minor. This abuse has had a profound recurring effect on my life, which has resulted in my need for ongoing therapeutic and substance abuse related counseling. There are few areas in my life where this has not had a debilitating adverse affect, notably post-traumatic stress, ongoing social phobias, and repeated panic attacks.

During my time in a substance-related treatment center for priests, Bishop Donald W. Trautman (since retired) never asked me the origin of my problem, although it was noted in periodic treatment reports, until 2010, two years after my being discharged from treatment. Once he chose to speak to me about the nature of my abuse, his reaction to my reporting on the number of times it happened to me was “Oh, thank God” that it hadn’t happened to me more. Neither at that time nor subsequently did he initiate the protocols of the US Bishops Charter for the Protection of Minors.

In 2014, at which time I chose definitively to leave active ministry as a priest, I informed Bishop Lawrence Persico that I had been repeatedly molested by a priest in my childhood. He did not at that time, or subsequently, initiate an investigation of the priest or my claims as mandated by the Dallas Charter.

While I have shared these matters with law enforcement, I have sought no damages. My goal is to see that norms in place to ensure a safe environment for children and the vulnerable are followed. It is my hope in making this communication, other victims of this priest might not feel alone in their suffering.

2. After I conducted an investigation in 2013 at his behest, in my capacity as Vice-President for Catholic Mission and Identity for the Elk County Catholic School System, I informed Bishop Persico, as well as Rev. Nicholas Rouch (Vicar for Education), Anne-Marie Welsh (Diocesan Spokesperson), and additional Erie diocesan school officials of clear evidence of sexual abuse of at least two students by a lay faculty member at Elk County Catholic High School within the diocese of Erie. That faculty member is Denise Myers, formerly Denise Meyer, nee Geitner. The need for this investigation was suggested by education officials within the Diocese of Greensburg who believed problems taking place by the perpetrator in a new venue had begun within the confines of the Erie Diocese. A parallel investigation was taking place by law enforcement officials while I conducted my investigation. Upon reviewing the written results of my investigation, Bishop Persico, Rev. Rouch, Anne-Marie Welsh, and other diocesan officials who were privy to the situation instructed me not to share my findings with law enforcement. The protocols of the Dallas Charter were, therefore, contravened.

3. Upon my chosen leave from active ministry as a priest, I informed Bishop Lawrence Persico of the repeated molestation of a member of the Diocese of Erie by Rev. Joseph Gatto, Rector of Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, and a priest of the diocese of Buffalo involved for many years in seminary formation. While Persico assured me that he would confer with Bishop Malone, the only discernible response of Bishop Persico was to have me speak further with the victim, to alert the victim that he would be receiving a call from Bishop Persico. Upon my return replies to Bishop Persico from September to November 2014 he suggested that there were no grounds to proceed with any further action. Nonetheless, I was never contacted by the independent Diocesan Review Board of either diocese or interviewed about my awareness of the times, circumstances, or nature of the abuse, which although was

longstanding, and which I had repeatedly shared with priests in Buffalo. In this instance too, the Dallas Charter was never implemented, and Bishop Persico's queries to me cannot be regarded as independent.

The Problem: Bishops Persico and Trautman, as well as multiple diocesan officials failed to follow statutory norms for the investigation or reporting of perpetrators of clergy sexual abuse. Their failure ignores the pain of vulnerable children, fails to ensure a safe environment, and sets the stage for further victimization by a new generation of priests involved in seminary formation.

James G. Faluszcak

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James G. Faluszcak". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the typed name.