

5-12-08 - Priests Accused Of Abuse Living Among Us

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They're accused of horrendous crimes against children, now WBZ has uncovered disturbing information about Boston-area priests accused of abuse.

The priests were removed from their parishes by the Boston Archdiocese, but where did they go?

"I think he's very dangerous."

Alexa McPherson is talking about Peter Kanchong, once a practicing priest, now a nurse living in Dorchester.

"This particular priest lives near a school. People should know that."

He's referring to Edmund Charest who owns a condo in the Back Bay.

Both Kanchong and Charest are priests. Both stand accused of molesting or raping three children. Both were removed from ministry by the Boston Archdiocese and now live among us.

"If they're too dangerous to work in a Catholic parish, then they're too dangerous to unleash on the public with no notice, no warning, no monitoring and no oversight," said victim advocate Ed Clohessy.

But that's what's happened. An I-Team investigation has found there are at least 100 priests living in our cities and towns -- priests who the archdiocese has taken out of service because of credible allegations of sexual abuse.

Most of them never had to register as sex offenders because their cases never went to criminal court.

The archdiocese set them loose on the rest of us. "They shouldn't be anywhere near the general public," said Alexa. "Most of them have molested dozens of kids at a whack and those are the cases we know about."

Alexa says Peter Kanchong, sexually abused her and two of her brothers. Alexa's abuse started when she was 3.

Joe: He would molest and rape you?

Alexa: Yes.

Joe: In your own home?

Alexa: Yes.

Joe: How often?

Alexa: Every chance that he would get.

The abuse stopped in 1984. Alexa was 9-and-a-half. "My father walked in and caught him trying to rape me on the living room couch."

The family took out a criminal complaint. No charges were filed. Kanchong was put on probation and the archdiocese took him out of ministry.

For the past 10 years, he's been a nurse -- his latest job is in Dorchester. "He keeps managing to find himself in those positions where he can work with defenseless, innocent people," said Alexa.

Edmund Charest was a priest at Our Lady of Grace in Everett in the 1960s. That's where this man met him.

Joe: You were 15-years old and he raped you?

Victim: Yes.

Joe: Several times?

Victim: In the course of a day, yes.

And that was the beginning. Three men have filed suit against Charest and the archdiocese, alleging Charest raped and molested them when they were boys.

Charest denies the charges. The archdiocese settled the cases and placed Charest on indefinite leave in 2003. "It concerns me a lot that he's out there."

He lives on Marlborough Street in the Back Bay, just a few doors down from a private elementary school that had no idea an alleged sex offender was in the neighborhood.

"We want to know anytime we should be more alert," said the school spokesperson.

Around the corner from Charest's condo is a park where Katie Travis brings her child. "I think they have an obligation to let people know."

But the archdiocese hasn't done that.

"If Cardinal O'Malley wants to truly make children safe and not just do beautiful rituals, he will release the names of the sexual offenders he knows about and their whereabouts," said Ann Barrett Doyle of BishopAccountability.org.

That's what victims' advocates want and some archdioceses, including Philadelphia, have responded by at least listing names and faces on their Web sites -- but not Boston.

The I-Team requested an interview with the Cardinal but his handlers refused. So we approached him at a ground breaking for a new school.

Joe: Cardinal O'Malley. Just a question, please, about the safety of children.

O'Malley: No. Thank you.

Silence that angers victims and advocates as well.

"They have a moral responsibility for protecting children from these offenders until these priests die," said Doyle.

Keep in mind most of the more than 100 alleged molesters we're talking about are still priests.

They collect a church pension. The archdiocese knows where they live and the Cardinal technically remains their boss. Despite all that, the archdiocese still refuses to make public a master list of who these men are and their exact whereabouts.

Peter Kanchong wouldn't answer the I-Team's question -- did he molest Alex McPherson and her brothers?

When the I-Team told Kanchong's most recent employer about his past, he was let go.

The Boston Archdiocese issued a statement saying it is committed to protecting children at all times.