

# **Father John Slown**

## **The Serial Abuser**

**Convicted priest put back in ministry**

**Hidden out of state to avoid criminal statute**

**Diocese officials knew about continued abuse for a decade, Cleric abused dozens, seduced parents to get to kids**

**Officials stopped investigation to preserve priest's "character"**

The first allegations in Father John Slown's file are shocking: the Diocese of Joliet learned that Slown molested five brothers. But Slown went a step further—like many child predators, he seduced the boys' mother, possibly to gain access to the children.

In response, Slown was sent on a "spiritual retreat." But his tendencies remained. For the next ten years, he exhibited erratic behavior, drank openly and to excess, molested children, and collected complaints from angry parishioners. Local Catholics weren't just upset that Slown was drunk, with roller-coaster-like mood swings. They also complained that Slown was grabbing children's testicles, punching kids, and sexually abusing boys.

In 1976, an investigation into Slown stalled because Fr. Virtue (another credibly accused molesting priest) did not want to "tarnish" Slown's character. The complaints continued, and Slown was put on sick leave. In 1978, William Donnelly told the parent of one of the abused boys that Slown would not be given an assignment around children. This was a lie; at the time, Slown was in a parish in Bradley.

In 1983, Slown was convicted of sexually abusing a boy in DuPage County. Church officials found numerous other victims and sent the priest to the Servants of the Paracletes. Understanding that Slown could not return to Joliet because of the statute of limitations, the priest was incardinated in the Diocese of Santa Fe. By 1987, Slown was living in Denver and receiving full retirement benefits.

Slown's current whereabouts are unknown.

## **TIMELINE – FATHER JOHN SLOWN**

5/30/59 – Ordained

6/12/59 – Assistant Pastor, St. Michael, Wheaton, IL

6/15/63 – Assistant Pastor, St. John, Winfield, IL

6/15/68 – Resident at St. Scholastica, Woodbridge, IL

7/07/68 – Assistant Pastor, St. Scholastica, Woodbridge, IL

2/20/69 – Private Retreat

**6/15/71 Letter from Fr. Kelly that Slown molested five brothers in Winfield, IL and that it is believed that Fr. Slown molested the mom as well. (177-179)**

10/05/71 Letter from Slown to Vonesh indicating that he has complied with Vonesh's requests to (1) not visit the families and (2) seeking professional help regarding the "situation that was most briefly discussed" with him.

10/08/71 Letter to Bp Blanchette from (unknown) at St. Patrick's, Joliet, IL stating he didn't want to leave the matter hanging in the air, so he contacted doctor who stated he was satisfied that everything was alright.

1/31/72 to 2/03/72 – Spiritual retreat to Abbey of Gethsamani, Trappist, KY

11/03/72 - Assistant Pastor, St. Mary Magdalene, Joliet, IL

11/28/74 According to a 1976 report, a college student told Virtue that Slown made sexual advances to him 2 years ago when student was 19. The boy stopped by to see Slown and Slown put his hand down the boy's pants in the genital area.

4/13/76 Letter from Blanchette to Slown reassuring Slown that he has no dissatisfaction or criticism as far as Slown's tenure at St. Mary Magdalene.

8/19/76 Letter from Fr. Virtue to Blanchette that a priest informed Virtue about a rumor that Fr. Slown had "homosexual interest in boys." This same priest also told Virtue that on 2 occasions at public dinners, people were appalled at the obscene speech of Fr. Slown, who had been drinking. Another pastor said that Slown was a "tortured person" with roller coaster-like mood swings. The teenagers of the parish, at least some, regard Slown's constant "handling" of the boys as "queer." They mentioned 2 other boys that may have also been objects of sexual advances by Slown. Virtue did not investigate these claims further due to lack of substantiation and to avoid raising the suspicion of Slown's character. In the last year, Virtue admits witnessing first hand Slown "cannot keep his hands off young men and boys...and does always bring up the topic of sexual matters in conversation with them..." Virtue contacted a psychiatrist himself to help him deal with his feelings about this matter.

8/31/76 Letter to Blanchette from Virtue that two people are willing to testify against Slown. (192)

10/02/76 Letter to Blanchette from Fr. Memenas that Slown was drunk at a wedding.

11/26/76 Slown upset with Fr. Virtue for "turning him in" and denies any of the accusations against him. States that Virtue is the one with the problem. Slown stated that Virtue goes swimming with the boys or plays handball with the boys. Thinks Virtue is jealous of him and is trying to push him out of the parish.

5/13/77 Letter to Blanchette from Slown re: Virtue's recent request to be transferred from St. Mary Magdalene.

8/03/77 Letter to Blanchette from Slown thanking him for transferring Fr. Virtue. (227)

**9/9/77 Memo to Blanchette that parishioners are concerned about Slown sexually abusing two boys. (200)**

9/10/77 – Leave of Absence

9/14/77 Letter from Blanchette to Slown. Fr. Memenas has kept him abreast of the developments in Slown's case and thanks him for his cooperation.

**6/19/78 Letter from Blanchette to parishioner that Slown requested a leave of absence because he "was not well."**

7/28/78 Memo to Blanchette, Ryan and Kucera that a parent reported that her son was sexually abused by Slown in Winfield, IL. Donnelly tells parent that Slown was on a leave of absence for a year and could have been receiving counselling for this or similar problems. "Did not mention Fr. Slown's recent assignment to Bradley." (263)

8/04/78 – Pastor, St. Joseph, Bradley, IL

9/6/78 Letter from Fr. Donnelly to victim's mother that the Bishop will take whatever action is necessary.

11/29/78 Letter to Bp. Kucera from Slown thanking him for spending time with him last week and allowing him to express his views on a "situation with ease and confidence." (268)

5/1979 – Fr. Slown out on sick leave.

1979/1980 According to a 2006 report, Slown fondled a minor. The boy told his mother who reported the abuse and was offered counseling.

2/13/80 Memo by Kucera that Fr. Vitus received report from parents that Slown had touched their son in an inappropriate manner. Parent says Slown has the bad habit of punching and wrestling the boys on the playground and other places. Parent promised to keep it confidential. (303-305). Kucera met with Slown on 2/18 and Slown denied any knowledge of the incident with the boy.

**5/21/80 Slown to participate in Evaluation and Assessment Program at HOA 6/22 to 6/25. (314)**

6/17/80 Letter to Parishoner from Imesch in follow-up to her 6/09 letter. Imesch states the matter was investigated by Bp Kucera and the decision was then made to ask Slown to take a leave of absence to seek treatment. This was not based on one incident alone, there were a number of things considered.

6/19/80 – Sick leave

- 7/15/1980 Letter from Imesch to HOA that he received recommendation that Slown go to St. Luke's Institute and has made arrangements. (352)
- 10/23/80 Letter from Slown to Imesch explains that Our Lady's Hall is used by the AD of Boston for their priests with alcoholic problems and St. Luke's Institute has been using it as a holding place for priests and brothers until space becomes available for them in their own facility. (366)**
- 2/11/81 Letter to Imesch from Slown thanking him for giving him the opportunity to participate in the St Luke's program. It has helped him break through barriers in his recovery from the disease of alcoholism.
- 5/15/81 – Associate pastor, Divine Savior, Downers Grove, IL
- 6/11/81 Letter from Imesch to parish priest that Slown will fill in only on an emergency basis at another parish.
- 11/06/81 – Administrator, St. Mark's, Wheaton, IL
- 3/03/82 – Pastor, St. Irene, Warrenville, IL
- 9/02/82 Memo to Fr. Imesch of concerns at St. Irene's. Tensions running high between the pastor and the school community. Slown showing erratic behavior, shouting and swearing.
- 10/15/82 Letter from Imesch to Clinic in Holliston, MA. Imesch doesn't feel Slown is being entirely honest in his efforts towards sobriety.
- 3/27/83 Letter to Imesch from Parishioner notes that a friend of her child and another boy were with Slown after school one day outside the church talking and Fr. Slown grabbed the boys' privates.
- 4/08/83 Letter from Imesch to doctor that when Slown is drinking, "this is possibly when his gay tendencies appear." Parishioner requests Slown be kept away from "our boys" and be put into the Chancery or somewhere away from young and naïve children.
- 9/01/83 – On leave
- 9/29/83 Letter from Imesch to St. Luke's stating that Fr. Slown will be reduced to associate pastor to relieve the pressures of ministry. If he continues to drink in his new capacity, Imesch will consult again regarding his suggestions.
- 10/01/83 – Associate, Christ the King, Lombard, IL
- 10/31/83 According to vicar general's 11/11/83 report, he interviewed the parents of boy who was abused by Slown. Assured the boy's parents that the Diocese of Joliet would sustain the expense of any counseling required as a result of this "unfortunate incident." (508)

According to vicar general's 11/12/83 report, he interviewed the parents of another boy who was abused by Slown at the same Halloween party. (510)

According to vicar general's 11/12/83 report, he interviewed another student in the sacristy of Christ the King. (511)

According to vicar general's 11/12/83 report, he interviewed parents of another student who said that Slown had tickled him and put his hands under the boy's jeans but not under his underwear. (512)

According to vical general's 11/12/83 report, the interviewed the parents that had called the police regarding the abuse issue. (513)

#### 11/01/83 – On sick leave

- 1/12/84 Slown at Servants of the Paraclete facility (523)
- 2/17/84 Letter from Imesch to Fr. Foley that the lawyer felt that the matter would be treated as a misdemeanor, but now there seems to be an effort to upgrade the charge. (525)
- 9/24/84 Fr. Slown is at Servants of the Paraclete facility in Jemez Springs. (535)
- 11/6/1984 Letter from attorney for Slown to Servants of the Paraclete that Slown was placed under terms of conditional discharge and the entire matter was heard in chambers. (541)
- 3/28/85 Letter from attorney to Imesch that Slown's "situation should terminate on May 23, 1985." (545)
- 4/11/85 Letter from Slown to Imesch that case will be closing and he is looking for a diocese and does not believe that he can actively minister in Joliet until the statute of limitations is reached. (548-549)**

#### 11/15/85 – Granted faculties in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe

- 11/22/85 Letter from Archbishop of Santa Fe granting faculties and assigning him to Nativity parish. (555)
- 4/24/86 Letter from Archbishop Sanchez to Slown terminating his assignment. The Paraclete Fathers at Jemez have made an offer for a place for Slown to reside. (565)
- 5/01/86 Memo from Imesch that Slown not welcome back at Jemez Springs. (566)
- 2/13/87 The Priests' Retirement Board agree to pay Slown \$2000 to get him adjusted to his present situation. He will also be kept on the health insurance program until he obtains employment that offers health benefits. (587-588)
- 3/06/87 Imesch met with Slown on 3/04. He is still living with his sister in Denver. Imesch told him that his prospects of returning to ministry in the future were not bright. (591-592)

- 5/02 Four more victims come forward to the Diocese of Joliet.
- 7/08/02 The entire priest file of John Slown consisting of 615 pages, with the last page dated May 16, 2002 was turned over to Will County State's Attorney.
- 4/03/06 Slown will appear on Diocese of Joliet's website as a priest with credible/substantiated allegations made against him. Listing states that he was removed from ministry in 1983. (688)
- 9/25/06 Memo that a parishioner asked for Slown's picture to be taken down from St. Joseph's parish because he is a molester. Chancellor told called that his picture was not to honor him but because he was part of history. (692)
- 11/20/07 Slown continues to receive pension benefits. (695)