

**BASILIAN JUSTICE ADVOCATE FOR CANADA
AND NORTHERN UNITED STATES**

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT

To: Fr. Gordon Judd, C.S.B., Vicar General

Allegation of sexual abuse against:

**Fr. Michael Fallona, C.S.B.
Anglin House
Toronto, Ontario**

Allegation submitted by:

**Brenda Brunelle (nee Hartman)
[REDACTED], Windsor, ON
[REDACTED]**

Husband: Don (married 20 years); second marriage for both; practicing R.C.s

Date: July 19, 2009

As requested, I interviewed Brenda at her home on June 18, 2009. Her husband Don (D.) was present during this time. Brenda (B.) appeared distressed and at time angry, as might be expected. D. was very cooperative and spoke briefly at the beginning of the interview. He related that he only learned of this experience of late but that it did explain some things about their relationship. I ask what he meant and he related that he had always noticed how hard it was to get close to B. and struggled with intimacy with her. He believed it was somehow his failure or fault. Having now been aware of B. past experience, things "make sense".

B. began her story by telling me forcefully what she wanted: "to face this man and to hear from him why he did these things to her". She was adamant about this. She also stated that she decided to come forward now after all these years due to the publicity concerning sexual abuse issues in the Church and more recently events in the London Diocese around Fr. Charles Sylvester, a priest with more than 57 charges. So, in her words, "she went on a hunt to find this man (Fr. Fallona)". I then invited her to tell me her story.

B. and her family were very active in St. Vincent DePaul Parish in Windsor. She was involved in the youth group and was an altar server. Fr. Michael (M.) was stationed at the parish during a sabbatical at the invitation of Fr. Chris Quinlan, the pastor. Our records in fact do indicate an appointment Sept. 1, 1978 – Sept. 1, 1979 to that parish. B. attended the parish school.

M. began to show an interest in B. during this time and grew over a period of 4-5 months (“he gradually seduced me over time without my realizing it”). She stated that he would often take her out of class or call her at home to come to the church to help clean it or to do other kinds of work. They never went to the rectory. She thought it strange that M. would thank her in ways that seemed exaggerated. And there were times that he would be very close to her and was frequently hugging her.

Slowly B. became more and more uncomfortable with the attention. One episode finally brought things to a crisis point. M. phoned her at home and asked her to come to the church to “change light bulbs”. In the sacristy, M. began telling her how important it was to be loved, how people get love in different ways. He began stroking her, pushing his body against her, touching her sexually. He tried to get to touch his erect penis while telling her that this is what happens to boys if you get too close to them. B. realized she was in trouble and was able to tell M. that she was going to tell her mother. M. then let her go and said that he was only trying to “prepare her”—presumably for growing up. The episode ended.

B. felt ashamed and went home. She did inform her parents but was simply told that she must have “misunderstood” or “misinterpreted” events. She wanted to quit altar serving and when her father would not allow it (“you finish what you started”), B. then avoided church and any contact with M. He left the parish soon after.

Recently, her mother did relate a story that returning home after B. confirmation or graduation, she did mention to her husband “Did you notice how Fr. M. kept staring at B.? Maybe something did happen.”

The interview concluded with B. once again insisting on a personal interview with M.

Interview with Fr. Michael Fallona, C.S.B.

This interview took place at the Curial Offices in Toronto on Friday, July 10, 2009. This was delayed due to my travel plans to Italy. At my request, Fr. Wilf Janisse, C.S.B., superior of Anglin House, was present. M. appeared to be calm and very cooperative.

I related the substance of the allegation and M. response was that he had absolutely no recollection of this woman or her parents. He clearly stated that he could not remember, did not have any recollection of any of the events outlined by B. He stated that he had no role in the schools (there were three in the parish) other than a liturgical one. Also, he was in no way responsible for the altar servers and certainly does not remember any of them.

M. did relate a number of experiences in the parish and generally found the year to be a supportive and pleasant one.

When I returned home to Windsor, I received a voice message from M. wanting to clarify his remarks saying that when he said that he had no memory or recollection of the events outlined, he meant that these did not happen. He was very emphatic about this.

Phone conversation with Fr. Chris Quinlan, then pastor of St. Vincent DePaul parish and now retired:

Fr. Chris was aware that of the allegation as he had been in contact with M. Fr. Chris was very clear that he had no cause to consider this allegation as truthful. In fact, he stated that B. "lives in her own world", and is prone to fantasy—that this would be just the kind of experience she would imagine. His conclusion is that B. is a very disturbed woman and not to be believed.

Summary:

This case presents us with a variety of problems. On the one hand, the abused is normally to be believed if the allegation can be substantiated and supported. In this regard, B. seemed to me to be quite credible. However, my conversation with Fr. Quinlan has raised doubts in my mind. I suggest further consultation with the members of the Review Board who may give some insights and further direction.

Bill

William A. Riegel, C.S.B.
Promoter of Justice