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Former Priest Sentenced to Prison for Sexual Misconduct

09/01/2005

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John Bussmann Victimized Female Parishioners

MINNEAPOLIS (Thursday, September 1, 2005) – A St. Paul man was sentenced this afternoon to prison for sexual misconduct with female parishioners when he served as a Catholic priest in Hennepin County.

In July, a Hennepin County jury convicted John Joseph Bussmann, age 51 (DOB: 3/10/54), of two counts of 3rd degree criminal sexual conduct.

In May, another Hennepin County jury convicted Bussmann of sexual misconduct and theft charges involving a female employee and parishioner while he served as a priest. In that case, he was found guilty of two felony theft charges as well as 5th degree criminal sexual conduct and indecent exposure.

This afternoon, Hennepin County District Judge Diana Eagon sentenced Bussmann to 68 months in prison. Following his release from prison, he must register as a sex offender and he will be on conditional release for a 10-year period.

"In a full courtroom, Bussmann was forced to listen to the terrible suffering he inflicted on the victims, their families and the whole parish community he was supposed to serve," said County Attorney Amy Klobuchar. "He is a manipulative, remorseless predator who exploited the power and authority of his spiritual position to commit these crimes."

Klobuchar explained that consent was not a legal defense for the sexual misconduct charges, because the incidents happened in the context of Bussmann's ongoing religious counseling relationship with the victims.

Klobuchar credited the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocese for their full cooperation in the investigation. She noted that Father Kevin McDonough, Vicar General of the Archdiocese, testified for the prosecution at trial.

The Archdiocese removed Bussmann as a priest in March 2003.

The criminal case was investigated by the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office.

Bussmann was a priest at St. Walburga Catholic Church in Hassan and St. Martin's Catholic Church in Rogers. (In 2002, these two churches merged to form Mary Queen of Peace Catholic Church, located in Rogers.)

2003, at the church rectory, in his car, in her home and at his St. Paul condominium. Bussmann told her that God had put the two of them together and their relationship was a gift from God. Archdiocese officials advised her to report the matter to law enforcement. In September 2003, she reported the incidents to the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office.

During the criminal investigation, a search was conducted at Bussmann's St. Paul condominium. Investigators found documents that indicated Bussmann may have had a sexual relationship with another female parishioner. When investigators spoke with this woman, she told them that Bussmann had had sex with her at least four times between December 2002 and March 2003, at both the church rectory and his St. Paul condominium. Bussmann told this victim that her recently-deceased mother wanted them to be together.

Bussmann's defense attorney acknowledged that Bussmann was a "religious hypocrite" and had sex with the two women while he was a priest, but denied that these incidents happened in the context of an ongoing religious counseling relationship. Bussmann did not testify at either trial.

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OVER
DISEASE *Loopy*

Minnesota Department of Corrections

Offender Information



MORE INFORMATION



Demographic Information

OID Number: 218089
 Name: JOHN JOSEPH BUSSMANN
 Birth Date: 3/10/1954
 Current Status: Incarcerated
 Location: Minnesota Correctional Facility - St Cloud *2305 MN Blvd*
 Admit Date: 9/7/2005
 Anticipated Release Date: 6/8/2009
 **: Expiration Date: 6/8/2014
 Case Worker: D. Randall (320) 240-3000
 Supervising Agent:

Controlling Offense Information *

Offense Description: CSC 3-NO FRC-CLERGY-18 OLDER-F
 Offense Modifier: NOT/APPL
 Minnesota Statute(s): 609 344 1 1 ii 2
 609 101 2
 609 109 7
 County of Conviction: HENNEPIN
 Court File Number: 04011306

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the spirit

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March 25, 2004

Parishioners still striving to heal

The Catholic Spirit

Parishioners at Mary, Queen of Peace in Rogers will gather for a healing service at 3 p.m. Sunday help ease the pain of sexual exploitation of adult women by a priest who served the area for near The parish's current pastor, Father Mark Moriarty, had planned the service long before news brok about former pastor John Bussman.

Bussman — who was charged March 18 with criminal sexual conduct, indecent exposure and thef County authorities — served as pastor of St. Martin in Rogers and St. Walburga in Fletcher from J until his removal from ministry in March 2003. The parishes were combined in late 2001 as Mary,

The former priest is accused of having a sexual relationship with a woman he was counseling, ina touching another woman, and of indecent exposure of a third woman who he also exploited mone

One year before authorities arrested the former priest, Father Kevin McDonough, vicar general ar the curia, met in 2003 with parishioners to apologize and answer questions.

"He's out. He's long gone. He's been out of ministry for a year. He's done," Father McDonough sa the possibility of further ministry for Bussman.

"I talked to the whole parish when we removed him," Father McDonough said. "I told them I was apologetic that I did not do the disclosure as broadly or as quickly as I was supposed to do it. Fra mistake on my part. It wasn't a deliberate attempt. It was a failure to follow through on a commil knew was there and that we intended to make. In fact, it was a condition for his reassignment."

In a letter sent to priests and deacons, Archbishop Harry Flynn said, "I want to take this occasion us that we make a solemn promise of celibacy before God, and that we also hold a sacred trust w Some people may view the sexual involvement of a priest with an adult person in his care as little regrettable moral failing. We know that it is not only a serious sin, but also a violation of the vuln often characterizes the people who seek our assistance. I am deeply pained by the failure of one

Deacon Dominic Ehrmantraut, deacon at Mary, Queen of Peace, said Father Moriarty "is incredibly doing a marvelous job of leading [parishioners] to healing."

The parishioners are strong and faith-filled people who are handling the pain well, he added.

"They want to do what God calls them to do . . . to move forward and to do what is right and is n on evangelization and bring others back."

Bussman was ordained for the archdiocese in 1980 and served parishes in Stillwater and Robbins September 1986. He was suspended from the priesthood April 1, 1987, following what the archdic credible complaint" that he committed sexual misconduct against an adult woman, while serving a in Robbinsdale. At that time, he had a sexual relationship with a woman while he was counseling I the archdiocese.

Since 1992, the archdiocese has had an explicit policy against sexual exploitation of adults, Father said. "And even before that, the archdiocese participated in drafting the law under which former F was arrested," he added.

According to an archdiocesan statement, Bussman asked to be reinstated to his priestly ministry a suspension.

"He underwent two separate outside psychological evaluations and appeared before the Clergy Re review his fitness for renewal of his priestly role," the archdiocese said.

Father McDonough said the archdiocesan policy that has been in place since 1992 has allowed for reassignment of priests who may have committed a single offense against an adult, such as Bussr

"What we had in regard to Bussman, was knowledge of one violation of an adult woman, and that

John Bussman

