

be held in the parish hall to accommodate the overflow crowd who came to demonstrate, disrupt the meetings, or voice their concerns.

12. There were constant demands for Father Boucher's resignation, and demands that I state my position taking either one side or the other. The removal of the two previous associate pastors was wrongly interpreted as a victory for the SOS group, and only served to fuel their sense that the parish could be governed by public outcry and popular demand. By my second month there, police officers had to be present at all parish meetings to prevent the threat of violent confrontations. I watched Father Boucher, over the next several months, gradually buckle under the immense pressure, and finally he erupted in anger at protesters following a Sunday Mass. His outburst and foul language at a woman who thrust a sign in his face was recorded by television cameras and newspaper photographers, and the outcry for his removal was renewed.

13. Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this situation was the fact that, as a newly ordained priest, I had certain expectations of the diocesan leadership which were never met. I was dismayed at the lack of contact and support from Diocesan officials throughout the process. At one point I finally called the Chancellor of the Diocese, Msgr. Francis Christian (now the Auxiliary Bishop). Msgr. Christian seemed to be the person making most of the public statements about the situation, and most of the policy decisions. I expressed my concerns to Msgr. Christian that the pastor, Father Boucher, needed more support from the diocese than he was receiving. I also related to him an accusation which was made to me by some members of the SOS group that Father Boucher was placing telephone calls to their homes in the middle of the night and then would hang up the phone, sometimes after making lewd comments. Msgr. Christian merely told me to confront Father Boucher about this myself. In the year which I spent in the Hampton parish throughout this dispute, I never once heard from any diocesan official.

14. In the Fall of 1982 the civil lawsuit filed by the Sisters and the SOS suffered a setback. The Rockingham County Superior Court judge who heard the motions ruled that the matter was internal to the Church and therefore the civil court did not have jurisdiction. The Court ordered that the lawsuit be dismissed on this basis. The attorney for the Sisters and the SOS appealed the matter to the New Hampshire Supreme Judicial Court, and for the following months the battle on behalf of the Sisters

gained momentum in the local area as the statewide newspaper, The Manchester Union Leader, joined their cause through frequent editorials deeply critical of the diocesan and parish leadership, the apparent lack of due process in unilaterally terminating the Sisters' positions, and the lack of response by diocesan and parish officials in the many calls for an explanation. Someone on the diocesan level leaked inaccurate and out of context information to the newspapers that the real reason the Sisters' were fired was that one of them had been "morally inappropriate" with a student while the others covered this up. This accusation, quoting an unknown source, drove the entire matter to the level of a frenzy.

15. On the afternoon of Christmas Eve, 1982 the New Hampshire Supreme Court, in a precedent setting decision, vacated the earlier decision of the Superior Court judge, and ordered that the matter was a contract dispute over which the Court had jurisdiction. The appellate court wrote in its decision that the Sisters' religious status did not preclude their civil rights, and therefore they were granted access to the Court to have their lawsuit heard. This was a major victory for their supporters in a case which, I believed from the very beginning, the Diocese should not have been involved. The Sisters were, in fact, dismissed without due process and without being given an opportunity to respond. On the night of Christmas Eve I was called to the home of one of the Parish Council members along with the police. Supporters of the Sisters organized a motorcade and drove to the homes of each of the Parish Council members who supported the decisions of the pastor and diocese blowing their horns in victory. In one case, a rock was thrown threw the window of one of the homes. The matter took on a vigilante tone. In the months to follow, the SOS gained broad support and momentum while both sides awaited a date to try the case in court. Other organizations, such as the National Association of Women Religious and the National Conference of American Nuns, issued statements in support of the Sisters' cause drawing further national attention to what at this point had become a cause celeb, for what was perceived as the hierarchical oppression of women religious.

16. In the months following Christmas of 1982 Father Boucher and I came under constant public attack. One woman who was a staunch and outspoken member of the SOS made a series of appointments with me to discuss how this matter has effected her faith. After three meetings she falsely accused me to other SOS members of making sexual advances toward her. Another woman told a newspaper reporter,

resulting in a headline story, that I had refused to give her the Eucharist at Christmas Mass, and had fiercely refused to offer her children the Sign of Peace at Mass when they approached me. None of this was true. One of the Sisters was quoted in the local press as claiming that she came to the rectory door on Christmas day to extend a greeting of peace to me, and that I then swore at her and slammed the door in her face. This, too, was untrue. Throughout all of this, the Diocese maintained absolute silence.

17. In May of 1983 my father died suddenly in Massachusetts at the age of 52. On the same day as his death the Diocese announced, a few days before a scheduled court trial, that it had reached a settlement with the Sisters and their attorneys, and that the matter would not have to go to trial. The announced settlement was that the Sisters and the SOS would withdraw their lawsuit, and in exchange the Diocese and parish agreed to allow the Sisters to remain in residence in the parish convent for another year, would pay each of the Sisters two year's salary, and would pay all their legal expenses in bringing the lawsuit. The legal expenses alone reportedly amounted to over \$100,000.00. Father Boucher and I both learned of this for the first time by hearing it on the television news. Quickly the news of the settlement spread, and now those parishioners who had remained supportive of the pastoral staff accused us of selling out. No one believed that we were not a party to, or even aware of, the settlement. On May 17, 1983 I celebrated my father's funeral Mass in Massachusetts at 10:00 AM, and attended a hearing at Rockingham county Superior Court to finalize the settlement at 2:00 PM.

18. Following that hearing Father Boucher and I met. I told Father Boucher of my intention to resign from the parish and urged him to do the same. I felt that the wounds of the parish were deeply felt, and could only be healed with an entirely new pastoral staff. Father Boucher agreed, and said that he would address this with the Bishop. The next day Father Boucher informed me that the bishop accepted his resignation but did not want to accept mine since he feared that it would appear that our leaving was a part of the deal, and would be interpreted negatively. I then contacted the bishop for an appointment which I obtained for the following afternoon.

19. The next day I met briefly with Bishop Gendron at his office in Manchester. Bishop Gendron was unhappy about my decision to leave the Hampton parish, but said

that he would permit it. He told me that he had some misgivings about my being assigned there as a first assignment, but that the Personnel Board recommended it and he acceded to their recommendation. He then instructed me to meet with Auxiliary Bishop Robert Mulvee (now Bishop of Providence, Rhode Island), who chaired the Personnel Board, to discuss an assignment. Bishop Mulvee met with me on the same day, and told me that I had really messed things up by my insistence on resigning. He said that he and the Personnel Board had strong misgivings about Hampton as my first assignment, but that Bishop Gendron overruled the Board and assigned me there against their recommendation. I did not confront him on the divergent accounts of the two bishops. Bishop Mulvee then said that I had earned a better assignment and said that he would assign me to St. Bernard Parish in Keene effective June 15, 1983. Bishop Mulvee then asked me to return to Hampton, and to ask Father Boucher to agree that we would both keep our resignations confidential to give the Diocese an opportunity to announce that it was our own decision. That evening, Father Boucher and I were watching the 11:00 P.M. news on a local television station, and were surprised to hear the news anchor say that officials of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Manchester have announced their decision to remove the two parish priests in the wake of an out-of-court settlement of the Sisters' lawsuit. Father Boucher and I both protested this to the Bishop, but he insisted that he had no idea how this account was released to the media. On June 15, 1983 father Boucher and I said good-bye. Father Boucher left for the city of Laconia as pastor, and I left for St. Bernard Parish in Keene as associate pastor.

20. I arrived at St. Bernard Parish in Keene on the same day, June 15, 1983. When I arrived I learned that there were three other priests living in the rectory. These were the Pastor, Father Gabriel Houle (now deceased), who had been there for seven years; Father Wilfrid Bombardier, an elderly priest who was semi-retired; and Father Daniel Dupuis (who is now laicized and married). Father Dupuis informed me that he had made a decision to leave ministry after three years there, and that Father Houle had recently relapsed after two attempts at residential treatment for alcoholism. The Diocese, I then learned, had arranged for Father Houle to again be admitted for residential alcoholism treatment at Guest House, a facility for priests in Minnesota. Father Houle was to be admitted upon my arrival, and Father Dupuis had agreed with the Bishop that he would remain at the parish for most of that Summer to assist me

until Father Houle returned. Neither bishop had related any of this information to me when I was assigned there. Father Houle's elderly mother also resided in the rectory and was the cook and housekeeper for her son. Because the living quarters were all in use, I spent that first Summer in a guest room on the rectory's second floor.

21. Later in that same Summer I learned from news accounts that Father Stephen Scruton, the pastor of St. John Parish in Hudson where I was ordained, had been arrested and charged with indecent exposure and lewd conduct for allegedly making sexual advances to a young adult male at a highway rest area near his parish. This was one of the first highly publicized scandals involving a priest of the Diocese so it received much press coverage. Following the arrest, Father Scruton was placed on paid sick leave by the diocese for the next two years. Also during that Summer I learned that the associate pastor in Hudson, Father Mark Flemming, who was working with Father Scruton, was accused of the sexual abuse of a minor male in the Hudson rectory, and was quietly removed from the parish. Father Scruton was investigated for having witnessed the behaviors of Father Fleming, but neither was charged with a crime, and the matter quietly dissipated. Father Fleming left the Diocese at that time. I also then learned that Father Fleming had been assigned to St. Bernard Parish in Keene as a deacon just prior to his ordination and first assignment in Hudson, and that he had also been accused of sexual abuse in Keene.

22. At the end of the Summer of 1983, Father Houle returned from his stay at Guest House, and Father Dupuis left the parish and the priesthood. Within days of his return, however, Father Houle began drinking alcohol again. I was dismayed at the atmosphere and tension of the rectory situation following a difficult year in Hampton. This only became worse, however, when in November of 1983 I too was accused of sexual misconduct in a claim from my previous parish in Hampton alleged to have occurred sometime before I left there. The claim was baseless, but disturbing. The claim was brought by a young man who told a counselor that I had hugged him inappropriately when he came to me for counseling in the months before I left the parish. The claim was passed onto investigators for the state's Division of Children and Youth Services who were responsible for the investigation of all claims of suspected child abuse.

23. At first I thought that the claim was simply more of what I had been experiencing in Hampton¹ in terms of the constant barrage of false accusations attempting to discredit me and Father Boucher. In the weeks following the claim, however, I learned that it was something much more. The young man making the claim, [REDACTED] was a fourteen year old boy who had come to see me three times when I was in Hampton. Each time I met with him in a first floor office after he was allowed in by the secretary. When I left Hampton, the young man was angry about the entire situation and accused me of abandoning him and the parish. He continued to call me collect at my new assignment, but after a few months I ceased accepting his calls. I learned of the accusation from Msgr. Christian who also told me that the young man claimed that Father Boucher walked in on the alleged inappropriate behavior and witnessed it. He also claimed that he had complained to Father Boucher that I made inappropriate advances to him. I called Father Boucher to ask about this. Father Boucher told me that none of this was true, but also added that no one from either the Diocese or the Division for Children and Youth had contacted him about it. I later learned that the Diocese told the investigators that I had admitted to this, and it was then dismissed as a founded but minor incident. I had admitted to nothing,¹ but it seemed that Diocesan officials were fearful of resurrecting the entire Hampton affair again so they took "the path of least resistance" to adjudicate the matter. Two years went by before I learned anything further about this allegation.

24. Sometime in early 1984 I received a telephone call from a woman who lived in the town of Salem, Father Houle's former parish. She asked for me specifically, and told me that Father Houle had been "stalking" her. She said that a year earlier her husband had died, and that Father Houle, as their former pastor, concelebrated the funeral Mass. The woman said that at the cemetery Father Houle consoled her and offered to drive her home. A week later, she reported, Father Houle began showing up at her home with alcohol, and they began to drink together. This relationship eventually led to a sexual relationship which the woman had made a decision to terminate. She complained that Father Houle was not allowing her to terminate the relationship, and began showing up at her home and place of employment, and to follow her. She was concerned that Father Houle was again drinking heavily, and was worried for his safety. With her permission I contacted Msgr. Christian, the Diocesan Chancellor and Bishop's Secretary. I related the woman's account to Msgr. Christian, and he merely told me

1. [REDACTED] original complaint in November of 1983 was that I hugged and attempted to kiss him when he came to talk with me. I did, in fact, admit to hugging [REDACTED] and acknowledged this was not appropriate behavior.