

Spencer Abbey sexual abuse case reveals truth; was cover-up during trial. Hermit nun becomes victim of smear campaign.

The case of Sister Keri Burnor, a Hermit nun who once attended the Spencer Abbey to pray on a regular basis under investigation shows that those who were in the position to protect the young nun turned on her for reporting being sexually abused.

The Spencer Abbey refused to take her allegations seriously, and failed to report to the police or District Attorney John Conte the sexual assault. The Auburn State police unit attached to the DA's office failed to bring Father Joseph Chu-Cong to the Auburn headquarters for an interrogation. Assistant District Attorney Anthony Marotta failed to call the fresh complaint witness to the stand during the trial as well as failing to call Father Peter Joyce to testify on the behalf of Sister Keri after having once changed the trial date to allow his testimony.

This sexual abuse case shows clearly that the Worcester Diocese had accepted Sister Keri into the diocese and was aware that she sought the status of hermit nun. Then Bishop Daniel Reilly had met with the young candidate, blessed her ring thus putting forth her acceptance.

Before the case went to trial both the Spencer Abbey and the Diocese became aware of another victim of Chu-Cong and was told that Sister Keri's story was remarkably similar to her breast being touched by Father Chu-Cong some years ago. Later, after the trial, this victim in a letter expressed to Bishop Reilly and Abbot Damian Carr that she had heard of the story through a sister of the Petersham St. Scholastica's Priory and had never met Sister Keri prior to her reporting her allegations.

This case is at the best one of the worse ever seen by the Voice. At times it has been extremely frustrating hearing the violations faced by those who have been victimized and re-victimized when attempting to seek justification from within the Worcester Diocese and being met with incompetence. This case of all cases shows what status Nuns are placed within the dioceses and the total lack of respect for the calling to a life of serving God, when it comes to the methods applied when "addressing" sexual abuse.

As this case is so complex and revealing it can not be told in one article. The Voice will be writing a four part series encompassing the major portions of the case so it can be followed and examined properly.

Article one will examine the spiritual calling and time spent at the Abbey and religious life previous to the sexual assault.

Article two will address the events immediately following the assault, the failure of the Worcester Diocese to do the right thing.

Article three will examine the State police investigation and the court case Commonwealth v. Joseph Chu-Cong court no. 0269CR001116.

Article four will examine the life of Sister Keri after the trial and her quest to remain within her devotion to God.