News



Tyrone Cefalu, right, Bobby Goldberg, left, and his sister Debbie Goldberg pose for a photo Dec. 20, 2019, in front of Bobby Goldberg's home in suburban Chicago. (AP/Nam Y. Huh)

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One day in May of 1970, an 11-year-old boy and his disabled sister were sitting on the curb outside a Chicago tavern, waiting for their mother to come out. When a priest with crinkly eyes and a ready smile happened by and offered the family a ride home, they could not have been happier.

The boy, Robert J. Goldberg, now 61, would pay dearly for the favor, enduring what he describes as years of psychological control and sexual abuse he suffered while working as a child valet for the late Fr. Donald McGuire. He remained in the Jesuit's thrall for nearly 40 years, even volunteering to testify on McGuire's behalf during criminal trials that ultimately resulted in a 25-year prison sentence for the priest.

But today, Goldberg says he has finally broken the hold McGuire once had on him. And he has begun to tell his story, in interviews with The Associated Press and in a lawsuit he filed Dec. 30 in California state court in San Francisco.

The lawsuit charges that McGuire, a globe-trotting Jesuit with ties to St. Teresa of Calcutta, abused Goldberg "more than 1,000 times, in multiple states and countries," during sojourns to spiritual retreats throughout the United States and Europe.

On these trips, the lawsuit says, McGuire referred to Goldberg as his "protégé." All the while, the suit says, the boy carried his briefcase, ran errands and often endured daily abuse that included "sexual touching, oral copulation and anal penetration."

The lawsuit filed Dec. 30 doesn't currently name any defendants, but Goldberg's attorneys say the defendants will include the Jesuit religious order in the United States and the order's top leader in Rome, among others. They also say that Goldberg's abuse occurred at a time when powerful church officials — including Mother Teresa, who was elevated to sainthood by Pope Francis three years ago — knew that McGuire had been repeatedly accused of sexually abusing boys. Church officials went to great lengths to cover up his crimes, the suit alleges.

In the nearly two decades since the clergy abuse scandal erupted, thousands of survivors have stepped forward to tell their painful stories. Hundreds more revealed their abuse in lawsuits earlier this year, when the state of New York opened a one-year window that allows survivors to file child sex abuse lawsuits without regard to the statute of limitations. And hundreds more, including Goldberg, are expected to

step forward as a similar window opens Jan. 1 in California.

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>
> — *Terence McKiernan*
>
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But many victims still suffer in silence, often taking decades to step forward, if they ever do. Advocates say that Catholic priests, as representatives of God and respected members of their communities, are often able to exert control over the children they target, especially when they are helping the child or their families overcome poverty or other obstacles.

Terence McKiernan of BishopAccountability.org, which tracks the abuse crisis and maintains a data base of accused priests, said abusers in the Jesuit religious order are well-equipped to exercise psychological control over their victims because of the order's reputation as administrators of dozens of colleges and high schools in the United States alone.

"Everyone knows the Jesuits are smart and the Jesuits are sophisticated," he said. "And they often bring enormous sophistication to the abuse they perpetrate."

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Against all odds

Goldberg's journey from supporter to accuser took years to complete. The final stretch began last fall, on a cold October night in the suburbs of Chicago.

Tyrone Cefalu, another former assistant to McGuire, was watching TV at his home when he got an unexpected call from Goldberg and his sister. Cefalu and Goldberg had bonded over the years, discussing their time with McGuire and what they knew about the priest's dark side.

Goldberg, a scruffy former dog breeder, and his older sister Debbie, who has Down syndrome, had been living in southwest Virginia's coal country. But they had fled their home because Bobby feared a Virginia social service agency was trying to take Debbie away from him.

Now they were holed up at a nearby gas station, wondering if Cefalu could meet them and help them out. After some missed signals, Cefalu found the pair huddled under blankets in the back of a U-Haul cube truck, parked behind a church in Forest Park, Illinois — out of gas, out of money, and out of luck.

For Goldberg, it could have been the end of the road. Years of hard living had left him with a variety of ailments, including tumors in his throat and the loss of several teeth, which made it difficult for him to speak.

But that evening, against all odds, marked a new beginning. Goldberg and his sister followed Cefalu home, and Cefalu and his wife made beds for them in their living room. Over the next several weeks, the two one-time McGuire supporters explored their shared history, recalling McGuire as a messianic retreat leader able to instill loyalty in his victims and their families, many of them wealthy, devout Catholics.



Bobby Goldberg walks in front of his home Dec. 20, 2019, in suburban Chicago. Goldberg has filed a lawsuit claiming he was abused more than 1,000 times in multiple states and countries by the late Donald McGuire, a prominent American Jesuit priest who had close ties to Mother Teresa. (AP/Nam Y. Huh)

"He was very controlling. I had no say whatsoever," Goldberg told the AP, recalling the years he spent working and living with McGuire. "Whatever he told my mother he wanted me to do, I had to do it."

The key to Goldberg's slow transformation was Cefalu, who was once so devoted to McGuire that he spent six years working full time on the celebrated priest's defense, through two criminal trials and various appeals. His labors included scanning documents for McGuire's attorneys, drumming up witnesses, and investigating McGuire's accusers.

"McGuire asked me to find the dirt on those guys, and I found the dirt," he told the AP.

Like Goldberg, Cefalu met McGuire when he was a boy, but his circumstances were different. Goldberg was being raised by a single, Catholic mother of limited means — his Jewish father had recently died. Cefalu, by contrast, was part of a middle-class family and was headed for Loyola Academy, a prestigious Jesuit prep school where McGuire had been a teacher.

McGuire was a family friend who frequently appeared at the family home for dinner, Cefalu said. His family attended weekly Mass to hear McGuire sermonize and took part in his spiritual retreats, events where McGuire began to acquire a cult-like following.

"When he said Mass he would give a sermon that would go on for 45 minutes and everybody loved it," Cefalu recalled. "He'd been all over the world and could tell stories. He could sing. The guy was mesmerizing."

McGuire also won supporters by doing favors. "He'd tutor poor kids and help them get into good schools and graduate from good schools," Cefalu said. "If your family had problems, he would be there for you, and almost every family had some kind of serious problem that he could deal with."

During those years, Cefalu recalled, he began helping at his father's print shop, which produced McGuire's personal Christmas cards, a measure of his growing reach. "We started out printing 200 cards and that went up to 5,000," Cefalu said. "The guy had a following."

Roving ministry

After Goldberg and his family met McGuire that fateful day in 1970, the priest quickly ingratiated himself with Goldberg's mother, persuading her that Goldberg would be better off living under his supervision, according to the lawsuit.

During this time, Goldberg would spend evenings at McGuire's living quarters and sometimes would return to his family's home with McGuire, who would sleep with him in his bed. Meanwhile, Goldberg's mother came to rely on the funds that McGuire paid Goldberg for working as his assistant, $300 to $500 a week.

If Goldberg rebelled, by running off with his friends or refusing to have sex, McGuire punished him by locking him in a room for hours, Goldberg said.

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>
> *— Bobby Goldberg*
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McGuire also used sex as a punishment, he added. He said that once, when he got into an accident with McGuire's car, the priest ordered him to make amends by performing a menu of sexual favors.

Goldberg and his family followed along in 1976 when McGuire moved to San Francisco to assume a teaching assignment at the University of San Francisco, a Jesuit school, and promote a roving ministry in which he presided over religious retreats for wealthy Catholics, collecting large donations along the way.

It was during this time that McGuire developed ties with Mother Teresa, becoming her spiritual adviser while vetting nuns seeking to join the religious order she founded, the Missionaries of Charity.

In 1981, following new accusations of inappropriate relationships with boys — part of a series of accusations that had begun in the early 1960s — McGuire lost his teaching assignment and returned to Chicago. Once again, Goldberg and his family followed him, and Goldberg continued to give in to McGuire's sexual demands.

In 1990, Goldberg's family moved to Virginia. Even after the move, Goldberg said, he continued to rely on McGuire for financial support, especially during a three-year prison term for a drug conviction.

"There's a lot of things I remember, and a lot of things I try not to remember," he said.

A predatory history

Shortly after McGuire was ordained, in 1961, the Chicago Province of Jesuits (now part of the Midwest Jesuits) began hearing from church officials concerned about the young priest's relationships with boys. The complaints would keep coming for the next half century, continuing even after McGuire was defrocked and sentenced to prison.

They started when McGuire was living in Europe, in the early '60s, when church officials in Germany and Austria sent alarming reports of McGuire's activities. One official in Austria wrote that McGuire had "much relations with young boys, particularly some boys who work in our kitchen and who used to go to his room."

As a result, the Jesuits recalled McGuire from Europe but assigned him to a teaching position at Loyola Academy, where he molested students who would later file lawsuits and receive significant monetary settlements.

Each time the Jesuits received complaints that McGuire was sexually abusing boys, they would move him to another post, where he would continue his predatory behavior. Even after a psychiatric evaluation showed McGuire was sexually attracted to underage boys, the Jesuits continued to insist he was a priest in good standing, in part due to the urging of Mother Teresa.



Mother Teresa of Calcutta visits with men at a Missionaries of Charity shelter program in Gallup, New Mexico, in this photo from the late 1980s. (CNS/Nancy Wiechec)

In a letter dated Feb. 2, 1994, after McGuire had been released from a residential treatment center, the future saint wrote to the leader of the Chicago Jesuits, saying she had received a letter from McGuire and believed that the accusations lodged against him were untrue. "I have confidence and trust in Fr. McGuire and wish to see his vital ministry resume as soon as possible," she wrote.

Mother Teresa got her wish, and McGuire continued his world-wide ministry, "openly traveling with young boys as his companions," according to Goldberg's lawsuit.

In 2002, after yet another complaint, the Jesuits restricted McGuire's ministry to the Chicago Archdiocese. In 2003, the first of several lawsuits against McGuire and his Jesuit superiors were filed.

Months later, a Wisconsin district attorney began investigating allegations that McGuire had abused two Loyola students during a trip in the late 1960s to the Lake Geneva resort area. The investigation led to a trial where nuns from Mother Teresa's religious order, wearing their distinctive white and blue habits, packed the courtroom. They wore buttons that said: "I support Fr. McGuire."

Despite that outpouring, McGuire was convicted. And while he was free on appeal he was charged by federal authorities with molesting another boy on trips to Austria and Switzerland. Once again, McGuire was convicted while protesting his innocence, leading to his 25-year prison term.

Officials in the Jesuits' Midwest Province could not be reached for comment Dec. 30.

In 2012, the Chicago Jesuit official who received Mother Teresa's letter, Fr. Bradley Schaeffer, issued a statement apologizing for failing to rein McGuire in. "I deeply regret that my actions were not enough to prevent him from engaging in these horrific crimes,'' he said.

Last year, when the Midwest Jesuits released a list naming 65 accused Jesuits, including McGuire, Provincial Brian Paulson issued a similar apology. "We are painfully aware that in earlier decades, some Midwest Jesuits were not removed from ministry quickly enough," he said. "We are deeply sorrowful."

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Too much to bear

It was only after McGuire began serving his 25-year federal prison sentence, in 2009, that Cefalu began to doubt his innocence. The turning point, he said, came when he was sorting McGuire's belongings and discovered a color slide that captured him as a naked 13-year-old, changing into his underwear during a trip to Canada with McGuire and another young teen.

"That really pissed me off," he said.

When he confronted McGuire during a visit to the federal prison in Texas where he was serving his sentence and McGuire denied taking the photo, Cefalu said, he knew the priest was lying. Back home in suburban Chicago, as he pored over more than 40 boxes of McGuire's records, his skepticism only grew.

Reading the documents was unsettling, Cefalu said, because he'd been one of McGuire's chief supporters, to the point where McGuire had appointed him to be his legal representative while in prison. In addition, Cefalu had known several of McGuire's victims while attending Loyola Academy, the Catholic prep school, during the late 1960s and early '70s.

The experience made Cefalu rethink the "horse bites" McGuire would sometimes give him, pinching him hard on his upper thigh and then placing his hand over his groin, exclaiming, "Gotcha!" Cefalu provided details of his alleged abuse by McGuire and another Jesuit in a lawsuit he filed five years ago, without the help of an attorney, in Cook County Circuit Court.

After reading the records McGuire had entrusted to him, Cefalu began reaching out to McGuire's other victims, hoping they might answer his many questions. And as McGuire's victims began filing lawsuits, they reached out to him.

Goldberg also knew McGuire's victims, not as an alumnus of Loyola Academy, but through the years he'd spent working as McGuire's assistant.

After the former priest was sent to prison, Cefalu and Goldberg occasionally talked on the phone and began to reassess their histories with the charismatic priest they had known. Their conversations continued after McGuire died behind bars in 2017, at age 86.

But it wasn't until Goldberg's desperate call to Cefalu in October 2018 that Goldberg's decision to go public with his allegations against McGuire and the church began to take shape.

Making peace

After Cefalu found Goldberg and his sister huddled in the back of their U-Haul in late 2018, Goldberg began revealing more details of his abuse to Cefalu. Cefalu came to believe that Goldberg had been abused over a longer period than any of McGuire's other victims.

Yet when Goldberg said he was ready to file a lawsuit, Cefalu hesitated.

Since discovering the nude photograph of himself in McGuire's files, he has nursed a growing antipathy for the Jesuits and the role they played covering up McGuire's crimes.



Bobby Goldberg and his sister Debbie arrive Dec. 21, 2019, at the office of his lawyer, Melissa Anderson, in Bannockburn, Illinois. (AP/Nam Y. Huh)

But his disdain for lawyers is nearly as great. "I have found that the lawyers, the psychiatrists, the therapists, have turned this whole thing into an industry," he said. "They're not interested in healing the people."

On the other hand, Cefalu understood that, without legal and financial help, Goldberg and his sister would likely remain homeless.

So, he grudgingly introduced them to a trio of lawyers with experience representing McGuire's victims: Chicago attorneys Marc Pearlman and Melissa Anderson, and Jeff Anderson, the Minnesota attorney who has represented clergy abuse survivors since the 1980s.

"They have a success rate, and Bobby needed a success," Cefalu said.

Today, the Goldbergs and their bullmastiff, Boss, remain inseparable, living in a modest duplex outside Chicago with help from a nearby nondenominational church and a generous individual who befriended Debbie while she was hospitalized for a staph infection.

During hours of interviews conducted with the AP over two days, Goldberg said his feelings about McGuire began to change after hearing victims testify at McGuire's criminal trial in Chicago, where he was scheduled to testify on the priest's behalf but never was called to the witness stand. In his head, he recalls, he imagined saying to McGuire: "I'll pray for you. You have no remorse for what you did to me or the others."

Goldberg was often tearful as he told his story, while his older sister looked on. He said he felt a sense of relief and connection with other people while unburdening himself, and that he has started to make peace with his memories of the priest who, he says, dominated his life and his family for so long.

"I have to forgive him, so I can get into heaven," he said.