

## **Archdiocese of Hartford sued for alleged sexual abuse by former Guilford priest**

**Former altar boy files lawsuit against Archdiocese of Hartford**

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The Archdiocese of Hartford has been sued by a former altar boy, claiming he was sexually abused by a priest who served three parishes in Greater New Haven.

The Rev. Daniel McSheffery has been accused of abusing the man, now 49 years old, between 1977 and 1982 when McSheffery was pastor of St. George Roman Catholic Church in Guilford.

McSheffery was ordained in 1956 and also served at St. Mary Church in Branford, St. Augustine Church in North Branford and St. Augustine Church and its school in Hartford, according to the lawsuit filed by attorney Thomas McNamara of **McNamara and Goodman** in New Haven. McSheffery died in 2014, according to Maria Zone, spokeswoman for the archdiocese, who said church officials would have no other comment on pending litigation.

"McSheffery was one of Connecticut's most cunning and deceitful child sexual abusers ever to wear a Roman collar," McNamara said. "Parishioners hung on his every word and he used his charisma to inflict lifelong harm on the most defenseless in the St. George community."

The spiritual leader of the archdiocese during the time of McSheffery's alleged abuse was the late Archbishop John F. Whealon.

According to the lawsuit, the alleged victim's mother raised him as a devout Catholic, and encouraged him to become an altar boy.

"The plaintiff was taught to believe, and did believe, that a Roman Catholic priest should be respected and obeyed without question as he was the ultimate authority in moral and spiritual matters and that he should follow a priest's instructions to the letter," the complaint states.

It claims the alleged victim sought pastoral counseling from McSheffery, and that "the plaintiff grew to be emotionally dependent" on him. From age 9 to age 14, the plaintiff allegedly was abused about 250 times, according to the lawsuit. The alleged abuse took place in the St. George rectory, on the church altar, in McSheffery's car and in his Old Saybrook cottage and in the plaintiff's home. The priest allegedly provided alcohol to the plaintiff, the suit states.

According to the complaint, McSheffery would assure the boy that "you're in charge" and told him, "What we're doing is okay, there's nothing to be ashamed of, and no one would believe you anyway. It's our secret."

The suit claims that the archdiocese had a duty to act "on behalf of the plaintiff's interests as to his well-being and emotional state and to be sure that he was free from any harm that would be caused" by McSheffery. It states that Whealon and others were told the priest was a danger to children but "chose not to disclose this information to its parishioners and those who would have contact with [McSheffery]."

According to the complaint, "The defendant actually kept all records of this reported sexual abuse in what is referred to as the 'Secret Archives,' also known as [McSheffery's] '379 File' or '489 File.'" That file was kept separate from the priest's employment file, "under lock and key, and can only be accessed by the Archbishop and the Chancellor of the Archdiocese," the lawsuit states.

McNamara said he has filed suit regarding McSheffery several times, all of which were settled before trial. "Wherever he was, he was this big, tall figure," McNamara said of McSheffery. "He had the gift of gab and education. He was very social with everybody and that was his cover."

McNamara said the alleged victim came forward after the statute of limitations, which ends on a plaintiff's 48th birthday, had run out. But he said that should not apply, because McSheffery had a fiduciary relationship with the alleged victim, and that a prior case, *Martinelli v. Diocese of Bridgeport*, established that the statute of limitations would not apply when such a relationship existed.

McSheffery's relationship with the plaintiff was "more than just the priest-parishioner [role]. The priest was this kid's counselor, adviser, pastoral counselor," McNamara said. "If there was a fiduciary relationship, the archdiocese had a duty to warn the

parishioners. There should not be a statute of limitations. Connecticut has recognized that people don't talk about this until later in life for various reasons."

McSheffery, then 71 and serving at St. Augustine in North Branford, was put on leave by the archdiocese in 2002 and investigated for sexual misconduct, according to New Haven Register reports. The Register reported that eight men sued, claiming McSheffery had abused them while he served in Hartford, North Branford and Guilford.

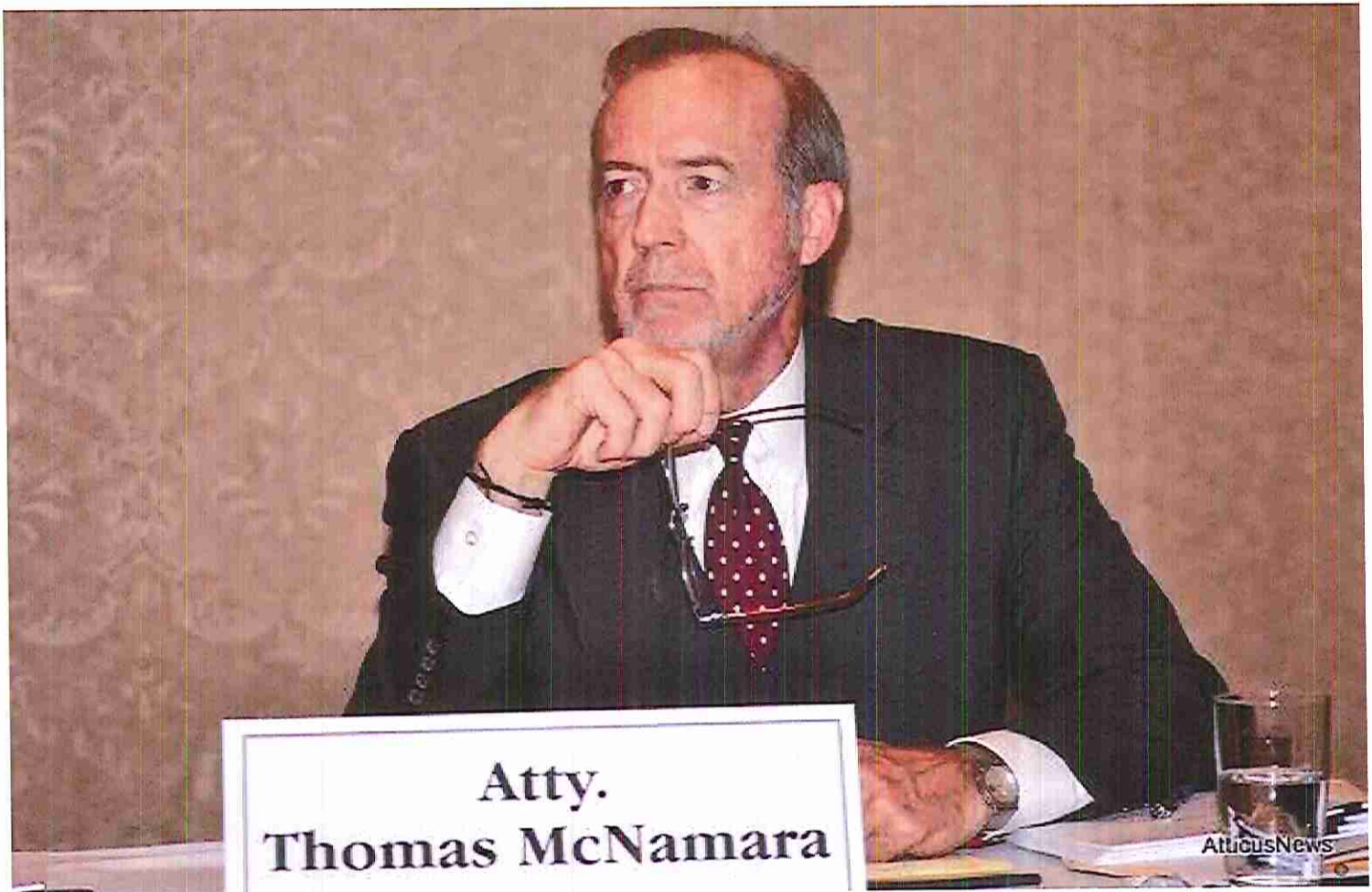
The archdiocese settled cases involving 14 priests, including McSheffery, in 2005 for \$22 million.

*Call Ed Stannard at 203-680-9382.*

[http://www.branfordseven.com/news/local/branford-attorney-takes-on-sexual-abuse-of-children-jehovah-s/article\\_5a686dc0-49e4-11e4-9a67-001a4bcf6878.html](http://www.branfordseven.com/news/local/branford-attorney-takes-on-sexual-abuse-of-children-jehovah-s/article_5a686dc0-49e4-11e4-9a67-001a4bcf6878.html)

## Branford Attorney Takes on Sexual Abuse of Children, Jehovah's Witnesses

Steven M. Mazzacane Oct 1, 2014



***Editors Note: The following includes accounts of sexual abuse of a minor.***

A Branford attorney is taking a lead role in bringing one of the first child molestation lawsuits against the Jehovah's Witnesses in the state of Connecticut.

Attorney Tom McNamara, a Branford resident and partner in the New Haven based McNamara and Goodman Law firm, announced Wednesday at a New Haven press conference that 4 separate suits are being filed against the Jehovah's Witnesses in a case that involved a series of child molestation incidents in a New Haven congregation.

McNamara and his co-counsel, Irwin Zalkin of a San Diego based Zalkin Law Firm, presented the cases of four plaintiffs, three girls and one boy, all of whom were under 18 at the time of the alleged sexual abuse, and in some cases, where the child was as young as 6.

"There lawsuits derive from sexual abuse of these young women and their brother at the hands of an ordained minister, a "ministerial servant," of the Jehovah's Witnesses," explained Zalkin. Zalkin stated that he has been involved in about 25 cases against the Jehovahs Witnesses. McNamara would also state this suit is the first in CT.

The suits allege that Orlando Afanador, 50, was a ministerial servant, and appointed position in the Jehovah's Witnesses, and a regular pioneer, a position which requires a minimum amount of hours be spent in the door-to-door ministry the Witnesses are well for.

Afanador is currently listed on the Connecticut Sex Offender Registry, after a conviction in 2010 in Nebraska.

The filings detail that Afanador would often babysit 3 of the plaintiffs, who were siblings and lived with their mother, an overnight nurse. The initial sexual abuse began here. In time, Afanador and his wife moved in with the family, serving as regular sitters for the children.

The filing reads that "Afanador would enter the plaintiffs room in the middle of the night and would begin kissing her legs and thighs. He would then proceed to perform oral sex on the Plaintiff as well as digitally penetrate the Plaintiff."

The plaintiff was 8 years old at the time. The filing reads that the conduct... "occurred on an almost nightly basis for approximately one year."

The filings indicate that on occasion the younger sister was also present in the room, and the detail other instances of sexual abuse.

Attorney Zalkin would not give specific details but indicated that Afanador has been involved in multiple additional cases of sexual abuse of a minor.

The documents, which list the East Spanish Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in New Haven as the defendant, lay out the case against the Jehovahs Witnesses organization as a whole.

"The Jehovah's Witnesses have an insidious problem, an epidemic problem with child sexual abuse with the organization. And the reason why they have this problem is because of the policies that come from their parent organization, the Watchtower and the head of all Jehovah's Witnesses in the world, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. The problem is this: they are more concerned about protecting themselves, the institution, from scandal, and protecting its reputation above their concern and protection of children," said Zalkin. "And they have instituted policies that require absolute silence that would prevent anyone from the outside world from ever know the problem's that they've had with abuse of children."

The filings indicate that before joining the Spanish congregation where the children were members, Afanador was a member of a separate congregation, where he, according to the complaint, "molested two children of a Jehovah's Witness family." The abuse was reported to the "elders" of the congregation, who then convened a Judicial Committee and reprovved Afanador.

Jehovah's Witness policy is that when a member goes from one congregation to another, a letter of introduction is sent, and in the case of child molesters, the letter must inform the new congregation of the past sexual abuse issues.

Soon after, as a member of the new congregation, Afanador was appointed a Ministerial Servant and soon after, engaged in the acts alleged in the complaint.

The complaints allege that the injuries sustained by the then-minors "were the result of the negligence and carelessness of the Defendants and their agents" and that the Jehovah's Witnesses should have known about Afanador's history of sexual abuse, that they failed to supervise Afanador in his interaction with minors, that they failed to report the conduct to authorities, and that they continued to use him as a Ministerial Servant and pioneer despite the obvious issues.

One of the victims stated they were moved to come forward after the case of Candace Conti in California, who was abused as a 9 year old girl by a member of a Jehovahs Witness congregation. The Conti case raised significant awareness of the issue when a jury awarded her a 28 million dollar verdict in 2012. The Conti case was also the first to see a jury verdict, as previous suits often resulted in settlements.

In the Conti case, evidence was shown that elders in the congregation took steps to cover up the abuse, as was Jehovahs Witness policy at the time. Additionally, the perpetrator in the case was a "rank-and-file" member. In the current case, the perpetrator held at least two appointed positions in the congregation, ministerial servant and pioneer, and the claim is that his previous history of sexual abuse of a minor was known prior to those appointments.

"It was just incredible to me that she would do that," stated one of the victims, "and it just brought out that there were so many victims in that organization...it was just like, ok, we need to speak out so others in our area know...there are more of us out there."