

SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF ERIE

PAUL BEMBIA,

Plaintiff(s),

-against-

THE DIOCESE OF BUFFALO, N.Y.; and ST.
BERNADETTE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SOCIETY
OF ARMOR, N.Y.,

Defendant(s).

Index No. [REDACTED]

Summons

Date Index No. Purchased: October 15, 2019

To the above named Defendant(s)

THE DIOCESE OF BUFFALO, N.Y., 795 Main Street, Buffalo, Erie County, New York
ST. BERNADETTE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SOCIETY OF ARMOR, N.Y., 5930 South Abbott Road,
Orchard Park, Erie County, New York

You are hereby summoned to answer the complaint in this action and to serve a copy of your answer, or, if the complaint is not served with this summons, to serve a notice of appearance, on the Plaintiff's attorney within 20 days after the service of this summons, exclusive of the day of service (or within 30 days after the service is complete if this summons is not personally delivered to you within the State of New York); and in case of your failure to appear or answer, judgment will be taken against you by default for the relief demanded in the complaint.

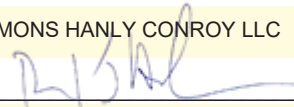
The basis of venue is one or more Defendant resides in Erie County
which is located in Erie County, New York

Dated: New York, New York

October 15, 2019

SIMMONS HANLY CONROY LLC

by



Paul J. Hanly, Jr.

Attorneys for Plaintiff

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**SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF ERIE**

PAUL BEMBIA,

Plaintiff,

v.

THE DIOCESE OF BUFFALO, N.Y.; and ST. BERNADETTE
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SOCIETY OF ARMOR, N.Y.,

Defendants.

Index No.

COMPLAINT

JURY TRIAL DEMANDED

Plaintiff Paul Bembia, by his attorneys Simmons Hanly Conroy LLC and the Law Offices of Mitchell Garabedian, brings this action against The Diocese of Buffalo, N.Y.; and St. Bernadette Roman Catholic Church Society of Armor, N.Y., and alleges, on personal knowledge as to himself and on information and belief as to all other matters, as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has personal jurisdiction over the Defendants pursuant to CPLR 301 and 302, in that the Defendants reside in New York.

2. This Court has jurisdiction over this action because the amount of damages Plaintiff seeks exceeds the jurisdictional limits of all lower courts which would otherwise have jurisdiction.

3. Venue for this action is proper in the County of Erie pursuant to CPLR 503 in that one or more of the Defendants reside in this County and a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims asserted herein occurred in this County.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff Paul Bembia ("Plaintiff") is an individual residing in Orchard Park, Erie County, New York.

5. Defendant The Diocese of Buffalo, N.Y. ("Diocese of Buffalo") is a religious

corporation organized pursuant to the New York Religious Corporations Law, with its principal office at 795 Main Street, Buffalo, Erie County, New York. The Diocese of Buffalo is a Roman Catholic diocese. At all relevant times, the Diocese of Buffalo created, oversaw, supervised, managed, controlled, directed and operated parishes or churches of the Diocese of Buffalo, including during all relevant times, St. Bernadette Roman Catholic Church Society of Armor, N.Y.

6. Defendant St. Bernadette Roman Catholic Church Society of Armor, N.Y. ("St. Bernadette's") is a Roman Catholic parish within and under the authority of the Diocese of Buffalo and is a religious corporation organized pursuant to the Religious Corporations Law with its principal office at 5930 South Abbott Road, Orchard Park, Erie County, New York. At all relevant times, the Diocese of Buffalo created, oversaw, supervised, managed, controlled, directed and operated St. Bernadette's.

FACTS COMMON TO ALL CLAIMS

7. Plaintiff and his family were parishioners of and attended St. Bernadette's when Plaintiff was a minor child.

8. During the times relevant to the allegations set forth herein, Father Louis A. Mako ("Father Mako") was assigned by Defendant Diocese of Buffalo to be a priest at St. Bernadette's where Plaintiff's family were parishioners. Father Mako died in 1998.

9. Through his positions at, within, or for the Defendants, Father Mako was put in direct contact with members of the Plaintiff's family, including Plaintiff, a minor parishioner of the Diocese of Buffalo.

10. In approximately 1968 when Plaintiff was approximately seven years of age, Plaintiff went to give his confession to Father Mako at St. Bernadette's.

11. Father Mako used this encounter, gained through his position at St. Bernadette's which granted him access to Plaintiff when Plaintiff was approximately seven years of age, to sexually assault, sexually abuse, and/or have sexual contact with the Plaintiff in violation of the laws of the State of New York.

Defendants' Responsibility for the Abuse Committed by Father Mako

12. At all times material hereto, Father Mako was under the management, supervision, employ, direction and/or control of Defendants Diocese of Buffalo and St. Bernadette's.

13. Through his positions at, within, or for the Defendants, Father Mako was put in direct contact with Plaintiff.

14. Father Mako used his position at, within, or for the Defendants and the implicit representations made by them about his character that accompanied that position, to gain Plaintiff's trust and confidence and to create an opportunity to be alone with, and touch, Plaintiff.

15. Defendants Diocese of Buffalo and St. Bernadette's had the duty to reasonably manage, supervise, control and/or direct priests who served St. Bernadette's, and specifically, had a duty not to aid pedophiles such as Father Mako by assigning, maintaining, and/or appointing them to positions with access to minors.

16. Defendants knew and/or reasonably should have known, and/or knowingly condoned, and/or covered up, the inappropriate and unlawful sexual activities of Father Mako, who sexually abused Plaintiff.

17. Defendant Diocese of Buffalo had a duty to the Plaintiff to properly supervise Diocese of Buffalo priests to ensure that priests did not use their positions with the Diocese of Buffalo as a tool for grooming and assaulting vulnerable children. Defendant Diocese of Buffalo knew or should have known that Father Mako used his positions with the Diocese of Buffalo to sexually abuse minor children, including the Plaintiff.

Consequences of the Abuse

18. Plaintiff suffered personal physical and psychological injuries and damages as a result of Father Mako's actions, as well as other damages related thereto, as a result of the childhood sexual abuse Plaintiff sustained.

19. As a direct result of the Defendants' conduct described herein, Plaintiff suffered and will continue to suffer great pain of mind and body, severe and permanent emotional distress, and physical manifestations of emotional distress. Plaintiff was prevented from obtaining the full enjoyment of life; has incurred and will continue to incur expenses for medical and psychological treatment, therapy, and counseling; and has incurred and will continue to incur loss of income and/or loss of earning capacity. As a victim of Father Mako's sexual abuse, Plaintiff is unable at this time to fully describe all of the details of that abuse and the extent of the harm he suffered as a result.

CAUSES OF ACTION

FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

Negligent Hiring/Retention/Supervision/Direction

20. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 19 as if fully set forth herein.

21. Defendants owed a duty of care to all minor persons, including Plaintiff, who were likely to come within the influence or supervision of Father Mako in his role as priest, counselor, trustee, director, officer, employee, agent, servant and/or volunteer, to insure that Father Mako did not use his assigned position to injure minors by sexual assault, sexual abuse, or sexual contact in violation of the laws of the State of New York.

22. Defendant Diocese of Buffalo at all relevant times held the parishes of the Diocese of Buffalo out to be safe places for minors to attend, and its priests as individuals to whom it was safe to entrust the care of minor children. Defendant Diocese of Buffalo entered into an express and/or implied duty to safely treat Plaintiff and assumed the duty to protect and care for him.

23. Father Mako sexually assaulted, sexually abused, and/or had sexual contact with Plaintiff when Plaintiff was a minor child at St. Bernadette's.

24. Defendants negligently hired, retained, directed, and supervised Father Mako, though they knew or should have known that Father Mako posed a threat of

sexual abuse to minors.

25. Defendants knew or should have known of Father Mako's propensity for the conduct which caused Plaintiff's injuries prior to, or at the time of, the injuries' occurrence.

26. Defendants were negligent in failing to properly supervise Father Mako.

27. The sexual abuse of children by adults, including priests, is a foreseeable result of negligence.

28. At all times material hereto, Defendants' actions were willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, negligent and/or outrageous in their disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff.

29. As a direct and proximate result, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer the injuries described herein.

30. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendants are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally and/or in the alternative liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

Negligence/Gross Negligence

31. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 19 as if fully set forth herein.

32. Defendants knew, or were negligent in not knowing, that Father Mako posed a threat of sexual abuse to children.

33. The acts of Father Mako described hereinabove were undertaken, and/or enabled by, and/or during the course, and/or within the scope of his respective employment, appointment, assignment, and/or agency with the Defendants.

34. Defendants owed Plaintiff, a minor at the relevant times of abuse, a duty to protect him from Father Mako's sexual deviancy and the consequential damages, both prior to and/or subsequent to Father Mako's misconduct.

35. Defendants' willful, wanton, grossly negligent and/or negligent act(s) of commission and/or omission, resulted directly and/or proximately in the damage set forth herein at length.

36. Defendants:

- a. gave improper or ambiguous orders or failed to make proper regulations, and/or employed improper persons or instrumentalities in work involving risk of harm to others;
- b. failed adequately to supervise the activities of Father Mako;
- c. permitted, and/or intentionally failed and/or neglected to prevent, negligent and/or grossly negligent conduct and/or allowed other tortious conduct by persons, whether or not their servants and/or agents and/or employees, upon premises or with instrumentalities under their control; and
- d. allowed the acts of omission and/or commission and/or any or all of the allegations set forth in this Complaint to occur.

37. At all times material hereto, with regard to the allegations contained herein, Father Mako was under the supervision, employ, direction and/or control of the Defendants.

38. At all times material hereto, Defendants' actions were willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, negligent and outrageous in their disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff, which amounted to conduct equivalent to criminality.

39. As a direct and/or indirect result of said conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer the injuries and damages described herein.

40. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendants are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally and/or in the alternative liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION
Breach of Non-Delegable Duty

41. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 19 as if fully set forth herein.

42. Plaintiff, when he was a minor, was placed in the care and supervision of the Defendants for the purposes of, *inter alia*, providing Plaintiff with a safe environment in which to participate in religious, educational, youth and recreational activities. There existed a non-delegable duty of trust between Plaintiff and the Defendants.

43. Plaintiff was a vulnerable child when placed within the care of the Defendants.

44. As a consequence, the Defendants were in the best position to prevent Plaintiff's abuse, to learn of Father Mako's sexual abuse of Plaintiff, and to stop it.

45. By virtue of the fact that Plaintiff was sexually abused as a minor child entrusted to the care of the Defendants, the Defendants breached their non-delegable duty to Plaintiff.

46. At all times material hereto Father Mako was under the supervision, employ, direction and/or control of the Defendants.

47. As a direct result of said conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer the injuries and damages described herein.

48. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendants are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally and/or in the alternative liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

FOURTH CAUSE OF ACTION
Breach of Fiduciary Duty

49. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 19 as if fully set forth herein.

50. There exists a fiduciary relationship of trust, confidence, and reliance

between Plaintiff and Defendants. This relationship is based on the entrustment of the Plaintiff while he was a minor child to the care and supervision of the agent or servant of the Defendants. This entrustment of the Plaintiff to the care and supervision of the Defendants, while the Plaintiff was a minor child, required the Defendants to assume a fiduciary relationship and to act in the best interests of the Plaintiff, as well as to protect him while he was a minor and vulnerable child.

51. Pursuant to their fiduciary relationship, the Defendants were entrusted with the well-being, care, and safety of Plaintiff.

52. Pursuant to their fiduciary relationship, the Defendants assumed a duty to act in the best interests of Plaintiff.

53. Defendants breached their fiduciary duty to Plaintiff.

54. At all times material hereto, the actions and/or inactions of the Defendants were willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, negligent and outrageous in their disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff.

55. As a direct result of said conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer the injuries and damages described herein.

56. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendants are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally and/or in the alternative liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

FIFTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Negligent Infliction of Emotional Distress

57. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 19 as if fully set forth herein.

58. As described above, the actions of the Defendants, their agents, servants, and/or employees were conducted in a negligent and/or grossly negligent manner.

59. Defendants' actions endangered Plaintiff's safety and caused him to fear for his own safety.

60. As a direct and proximate result of the Defendants' actions, which included but were not limited to negligent and/or grossly negligent conduct, Plaintiff suffered and will continue to suffer the severe injuries and damages described herein, including but not limited to, mental and emotional distress.

61. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendants are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally and/or in the alternative liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

SIXTH CAUSE OF ACTION

Breach of Duty in Loco Parentis

62. Plaintiff repeats and re-alleges each and every allegation set forth in paragraphs 1 through 19 as if fully set forth herein.

63. While he was a minor, Plaintiff was entrusted by his parents to the control of the Defendants, as well as directly to Father Mako, an agent or servant of the Defendants, for the purposes of *inter alia*, providing Plaintiff with appropriate guidance and an opportunity to enjoy educational and youth activities under responsible adult supervision. These Defendants owe – and owed – a duty to children entrusted to them to act *in loco parentis* and to prevent foreseeable injuries.

64. Defendants breached their duty to act *in loco parentis*.

65. At all times material hereto, the Defendants' actions were willful, wanton, malicious, reckless, negligent, grossly negligent and/or outrageous in their disregard for the rights and safety of Plaintiff.

66. As a direct result of the Defendants' conduct, Plaintiff has suffered and will continue to suffer the injuries and damages described herein.

67. By reason of the foregoing, the Defendants are liable to the Plaintiff, jointly, severally and/or in the alternative liable to the Plaintiff for compensatory damages and for punitive damages, together with interest and costs.

WHEREFORE Plaintiff, demands judgment against the Defendants on each cause of

action as follows:

- A. Awarding compensatory damages in an amount to be proved at trial, but in any event in an amount that exceeds the jurisdictional limits of all lower courts which would otherwise have jurisdiction;
- B. Awarding punitive damages to the extent permitted by law;
- C. Awarding prejudgment interest to the extent permitted by law;
- D. Awarding costs and fees of this action, including attorneys' fees, to the extent permitted by law; and
- E. Awarding such other and further relief as to this Court may seem just and proper.

JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff demands a trial by jury on all issues so triable.

Dated: October 15, 2019
New York, New York

Respectfully Submitted,

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