

Sensitive and Complex Cases – Case Studies

Case Study 3:

A family of 3 brothers were indecently assaulted by their cousin who is a priest (Fr. Declan). The abuse happened about 20 years ago but the brothers only shared their experiences recently. Each thought that they were the only victim.

Both families, the parents of John, Rob and Alan and the family of the perpetrator have always been and continue to be close. They live in a small rural, farming community and one of the brothers works with a nephew of the priest on his farm.

While the victims were willing to report the matter to the child protection services they were not willing to follow through with a criminal investigation.

When the matter was first reported Fr. Declan was still in ministry and denied the allegations. He was removed from ministry by his Bishop and an investigation was carried out by the diocese.

Eventually Fr Declan admitted to some of the allegations made by John, Rob and Alan and agreed to remain out of ministry and comply with whatever restrictions the diocese placed on him.

The disclosures have caused a difficult dynamic between the neighbouring families. Up until the priests confession the parents on both sides were reluctant to believe this could have happened. John, Rob and Alan now feel their family are angry with them for opening this ‘can of worms’ and can’t understand why they could have not just left well enough alone.

The brothers want this crime to be acknowledged by Fr. Declan to them and their parents.

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Case Study 3 – Continued:

As a group, consider the following questions:

‘Who has been affected and how?’

‘What are their needs?’

‘What might help meet those needs?’

‘What are the implications for the organisation?’