

46. Father Scruton then told me that he was being investigated since before his arrest in Hudson in 1983. He said that when he was pastor in Hudson his associate pastor, Father Mark Fleming, had repeatedly sexually abused an eleven year old boy in the rectory. He said that he walked into Father Fleming's bedroom one night and saw them together, and shortly after this it was reported and both he and Father Fleming were investigated. Father Scruton said that the suspicion was that he was permitting this to go on while he watched. No charges or publicity ensued, but Father Fleming was quietly removed from the parish and agreed to leave ministry. He also said that there was a quiet financial settlement between the diocese and the boy's family. Father Scruton then said that this was why he became so angry when Father Michael Barrett permitted a thirteen-year-old boy to sleep in the rectory. Father Scruton also said that he was aware that Father Fleming had been a deacon at St. Bernard Parish in Keene, and was accused of sexual abuse there before I was ordained. I did recall that Father Fleming was held up for ordination for some reason, and spent nearly two years as a deacon. St. John's parish in Hudson with Father Scruton was his first assignment as a priest.

47. The day after this conversation with Father Scruton in early May, 1987, he and [REDACTED] attended the hearing at which Father Scruton was given a suspended sentence and a \$500.00 fine. That afternoon Father Scruton gave an interview in the rectory for the local press during which he stated his intention to remain as pastor of the parish. He told the reporter that he was a sexual addict, and that he wanted to use his charges as an opportunity for people to learn about sexual addiction. The next day the story of his arrest, and the account of his bizarre interview with the reporters was front page news in The Keene Sentinel newspaper. I then told Father Scruton that I and the parish council members had been receiving calls from many parishioners and others in the community who felt that he should resign as pastor of the parish. He refused, and said he was planning to speak at all the Masses the following Sunday and tell the people to "grow up and accept him as he is." The next evening the parish celebrated its annual Confirmation ceremony. The Bishop did not attend as scheduled, but sent a retired Maryknoll bishop who knew nothing of what had transpired in the parish. Father Scruton insisted on concelebrating the Confirmation Mass and introducing each of the high school students who were being confirmed. The parishioners were incredulous that he was still there, and at the reception after

Confirmation I was confronted by an angry mob of parishioners demanding Father Scruton's immediate removal. Throughout this entire matter, which received statewide publicity, I heard nothing from Msgr. Christian or other diocesan officials.

48. I called Msgr. Christian at the chancery several times, and finally, the day after the publicity of Father Scruton's latest arrest, Msgr. Christian returned my call. I asked if he was aware of what had transpired, and he said that he was. I asked what his plans were for Father Scruton, and he said that something was going to be worked out, but it would take time and Father Scruton was to remain there until decisions were made. I then informed Msgr. Christian of Father Scruton's plan to speak at all the Sunday Masses and "tell the people to grow up". Msgr. Christian just said "don't let him", and he asked that I confront him myself. Finally, I did something I should have done much sooner. I told Msgr. Christian that by the following Sunday either Father Scruton or I would be gone from the parish, and it did not really matter to me which. He then said, "Have Father Scruton call me". That afternoon Father Scruton was ordered to Manchester, and he never returned. In the days which followed, I learned that there had been no intervention, and that he merely moved in with his mother. Two days after he left, I received a letter from the bishop again appointing me administrator of the parish. This was in the middle of May, 1987, and transfers took place in mid-June so I knew I would be alone there for a month.

49. The next weekend at the parish Masses I addressed the issue of Father Scruton's arrest and removal from the parish. I said that this was an issue of illness and not evil, and I asked for prayers and compassion for him. The next day I received a telephone call from an official at the bank where the parish kept its accounts. He told me that before Father Scruton left he removed some \$20,000 from parish accounts. The bank official said he is obliged to report the discrepancy to the police, but wanted to spare us another scandal and said he could give me two days to look into it. I then called Msgr. Christian and, typically, he told me to call Father Scruton at his mother's home in Dover, N.H. and confront him myself.. I called Father Scruton, and told him of the bank official's concern. Father Scruton accused me of "trying to ruin his life" and hung up on me. Two days later Fred Laffond, the parish business manager and cemetery director gave me two checks replacing most of what was taken, and asked that I permit Father Scruton to keep the remainder for his expenses. Mr. Laffond was angry with me because he saw no reason why Father Scruton had to leave the parish.

He expressed concern for Father Scruton, and asked if I could get the Diocese to place Father Scruton in a sexual addictions treatment facility in Minnesota known as Golden Valley. I told Mr. Laffond to obtain the necessary information, and said that if Father Scruton wanted to go there, he could. I then called Msgr. Christian again, but he balked at the idea of residential treatment for Father Scruton. I then told Msgr. Christian the story which Father Scruton had told me weeks earlier. Father Christian approved of the program, and I told Mr. Laffond to purchase airline tickets for himself and Father Scruton, and to fly out there with him. Father Scruton remained in the Golden valley program for thirty days, and then left.

50. The following weeks were the busiest, but the most peaceful, of my priesthood. I knew that I was emotionally and physically exhausted, but I also felt that I had survived an immense ordeal, and was intact. This was short lived, however. Three weeks after Father Scruton left, near the end of May, 1987 I was approached by a parishioner after an early morning weekday Mass. The man's name was [REDACTED]. He was friends with both Father Houle, and, subsequently, with Father Scruton, and he resented what he perceived as my "getting rid of them". Mr. [REDACTED] sarcastically told me that he will be sorry to see me leave. I asked what he meant and he said, "Oh, you don't know?" he then told me that a few days earlier he had been at a party and an unnamed official of the Diocese was there. The official told him that I would be transferred from Keene within a few weeks. I attempted to call Bishop Gendron but he was unavailable so (then) Auxiliary Bishop Joseph Gerry (now Bishop of Portland in Maine) took the call. I told Bishop Gerry of the conversation with Mr. [REDACTED] and expressed my concern that moving a year later would be no problem, but that if I was forcibly moved at that time many people in the parish and Diocese would interpret it as somehow related to Father Scruton's problems. Bishop Gerry said that he understood this, but knew nothing about the plan to move me. He said he would check with the Personnel Board and get back to me. I then called Father Gerard Boucher (my friend and former pastor in Hampton) who was still on the Diocesan Personnel Board. Father Boucher said that a week earlier the Bishop attended a Personnel board meeting and said "we have to move Father MacRae out of Keene". Father Boucher said that the Bishop offered no explanation, but left him with the impression that there was something wrong. Father Boucher said he would do some checking and get back to

me. The next day Bishop Gendron called me and said that Auxiliary Bishop Gerry and he had spoken, and he understood my concerns, but that the Personnel board was insistent on moving me. He said that their reason had to do with a situation at a parish in Nashua between the pastor and some parishioners, and the Board felt that I had 'gained some experience in dealing with difficult situations'. I asked Bishop Gendron to reconsider this, and to allow me to wait a few months in order to at least give the appearance that I was asking for a transfer. Bishop Gendron then gave me a week to consider the assignment, but whatever my choice was, I was leaving Keene. Later Father Boucher called me again, and said that he learned that after what took place in the parish the bishop could not find a pastor with any seniority who wanted to go here. Finally, Father Boucher said, the Bishop found one man who would accept, but would do so only on the condition that I move. I had a week to decide whether to accept a new assignment. Recalling what I was feeling then is difficult because I was clearly unhappy as a priest, and frightened of getting into another troubled situation in the Diocese.

51. The following week, in early June, was a mandatory annual clergy convocation required of all priests of the Diocese. The conference was to be held for four days at a resort hotel in North Conway, about three hours from Keene. I left for the conference, and looked forward to the time out, but not to being with brother priests. True to form, on my arrival I discovered that I was at the center of a lot of gossip and controversy over what had transpired in Keene. One priest joked, quoting the Gospel to me saying, "whenever two or more disasters are happening in the diocese, there's MacRae in the midst of them". For the first time, I hated being a priest. I remained isolated for most of the conference, and experienced a great deal of anxiety. Finally, near the end of the conference, something inexplicable occurred. The Diocese hosted a banquet at the conference each year to honor those who were celebrating their 25th, 40th and 50th anniversaries of ordination. I went to my hotel room and changed into my black suit and Roman collar for the banquet. I was feeling dismal, and seriously depressed, but did not know why. When I arrived at the banquet hall I was a little late, and everyone was standing while Bishop Gendron recited a prayer before the meal. As he concluded the prayer, and the other priests were seated, I realized that I was going to have to go from table to table to find an empty seat. I had many friends among priests of the Diocese, but I could not see any at first, and when I did their tables were full. I remained in the

doorway of the banquet hall, and was paralyzed with anxiety. I did not understand what was wrong, and intellectually told myself that it was ridiculous, but I could not walk into that hall. I felt that my priesthood was irreparably ruined. Finally, I walked back to my hotel room, burst into tears, and remained there crying for over an hour. I then changed and left to return to Keene. I sobbed for most of the three hour drive back to Keene, but I was not certain of what was wrong. I feared that perhaps I was having some sort of breakdown.

52. When I returned to Keene I learned that the rectory had been broken into and my office was ransacked, but I just could not deal with it. I went to my room, and became ill. I had a fever, and experienced something terribly discouraging which I had not experienced since childhood. I had an epileptic seizure and lost consciousness. I remained in bed and slept for almost two days after this. I had grand mal or generalized seizures as a child, but they ceased when I was thirteen years of age and were never diagnosed. Now, at the age of thirty-five, I was horrified that I had a reoccurrence of seizures. It was after two days in bed that I decided that I also needed help and could not accept the new assignment. I made an appointment with Bishop Gendron and went to see him later that week.

53. The meeting with Bishop Gendron was one of the most difficult encounters of my life. He said nothing about my experience in Hampton and that in Keene with Father Houle and Father Scruton, except to inform me that Father Scruton told him that he thought I was a repressed homosexual. I denied this, and Bishop Gendron then asked me, somewhat mysteriously, if Father Scruton had ever made sexual advances to me. I informed Bishop Gendron that when Father Scruton first arrived in the parish he did make some covert sexual gestures, but I was not responsive. Bishop Gendron also asked me why I did not come forward sooner with my concerns about Father Scruton's behavior. He said "We can not act on what we do not know." I then informed the Bishop that I had in fact attempted to communicate with Msgr. Christian on several occasions about Father Scruton. I then told Bishop Gendron what had happened at the clergy conference, and when I returned to Keene. I said that I did not feel that I could accept a new assignment in the Diocese at that time. I then requested to be placed on sick leave for six months, but Bishop Gendron refused. The Bishop asked me again if I would accept a new assignment in the Diocese, and I again told him that I did not feel that I could. He then instructed me to return to Keene and write him a letter requesting

an immediate leave of absence from ministry without faculties. He said that I would not be permitted to function as a priest until I was ready to accept an assignment, and said that if I wrote the letter he would review this with me again in one year.

54. I drove back to St. Bernard Rectory and did as instructed. A week later I was living in an unfurnished apartment in West Keene about four miles from the parish. I had no income, and had exhausted my small savings on a deposit and the first two months rent. I had no idea what I was going to do or where I was going to go, and for the first week in the apartment I just sat and stared out a window. I could not have explained what had happened in my priesthood. The news spread around the Diocese that I had a meeting with the Bishop and was suspended, and again this rumor became somehow associated with the affair surrounding Father Scruton. My family and closest friends were completely bewildered about what had happened to me. Within a few weeks, I was offered a position as director of an outpatient clinic in the community which provided counseling and monitoring services for recovering alcoholics and drug addicts. It had a staff of eight and had many problems. The agency had been through three directors in three years, and was about to lose its state and federal funding. I accepted the position with a one year commitment, but I was in no position mentally or emotionally to take on this responsibility. Still, the agency turned around and flourished over the next year, but I was very unhappy. From the day I left Bishop Gendron's office, I had no contact with or from any official of the Diocese.

55. By the Fall of 1988, I thought that my life could not possibly get worse. I had experienced epileptic seizures with increasing frequency, and became increasingly depressed. At one point I was hospitalized for two days following a seizure. I had become completely isolated from the Church, and from my family and most friends, and found myself contemplating suicide. There was a single parent family whom I had known for several years, and who had moved into the apartment building next to mine. In many ways they had counted on me for strength and support, and they became the only reason why I did not feel I could succumb to my depression and feelings of despair. I also kept these feelings well hidden even from them. I was about to learn that my life was going to become even more complicated, and in ways I could not have imagined.