



Francis “Fran” Hoefgen, OSB

Became a “foster father” to get victim to move into his home

Priest admitted abused to police, then St. John’s sent the monk out of state

Less than six months later, he was back in parishes

Archdiocese considered pulling political strings to punish victims’ attorneys

Less than four years after his ordination as a priest, Fr. Francis “Fran” Hoefgen found a perfect victim, a hospitalized, suicidal teen needing support and a place to live. In 1983, under the guise of a “foster parent,” Hoefgen moved the boy into the rectory with him at St. Boniface in Cold Spring and began abusing the boy.

A few months later, the boy moved into a proper foster home and disclosed the abuse to his new guardians. They informed the police and the system began to work ... almost. Hoefgen admitted the abuse to the police, but before a real investigation could start St. John’s sent Hoefgen to Saint Luke Institute for an evaluation. St. John’s convinced the police that they would cooperate with any charges. But with the priest out of state, the investigation stalled and charges were never filed.

By 1985, the dust had settled and Hoefgen had undergone church-run treatment. Sensing things were safe, St. John’s and the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis assigned Hoefgen back to a parish. This time in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, at St. Boniface in Hastings.

In 1992, the boy Hoefgen abused in 1983 filed a civil suit. Letters between church officials lamented that Hoefgen was being “tried in the court of public opinion.” He was quietly removed from his parish and a statement was made to parishioners that Hoefgen “responded positively to

treatment.” At the same time, they made sure that none of Hoefgen’s activities, including a public retreat, could be discovered by the press. In a letter from Sister Lynnette Friesen to Fr. Kevin McDonough of the Archdiocese, the nun said that disclosure is not a good option; they should instead consider pulling political strings to punish attorneys who are handling abuse cases.

After the civil suit was dismissed in 1994 on the statute of limitations, Hoefgen went back to work at St. John’s. He remained on the job until the 2002 Dallas Charter and Norms were adopted.

FRANCIS HOEFGEN, OSB TIMELINE

- 8/29/50 Francis Frederick Hoefgen born.
- 7/11/73 Hoefgen professed monastic vows as a monk at Saint John's Abbey in Collegeville Minnesota.
- 6/22/79 Hoefgen ordained a priest and assigned to Saint Boniface in Cold Spring, Minnesota under the pastorate of Father Brennan Maiers OSB.
- 1979-1983 Hoefgen sexually abused victim 1, victim 2 and victim 3.
- Spring 1983 Hoefgen met victim 1 while making pastoral visits to the Saint Cloud Hospital.
- June 1983 Hoefgen provided short term housing at Saint Boniface rectory in Cold Spring for victim 1 until Stearns County social services arranged foster home. Hoefgen repeatedly sexually molested victim 1.
- 3/3/84 A Stearns County social worker called Cold Springs Police Department regarding sexual abuse of a minor by Hoefgen.
- 3/17/84 The Stearns County Sheriff's Department took statement from victim 1 in the principal's office at Rocori High School.
- 3/18/84 Police informed Father Mel Taylor OSB, pastor at Saint Boniface, that he was going to take a statement from Hoefgen.
- 3/19/84 Police take statement from Hoefgen at law offices of Willenbring, Lickteig & Dahl so as not to "cause speculation." Hoefgen admitted to abusing a minor twice in June 1983.
- 3/20/84 Police met with Stearns County DA Roger Van Heel and turned in a report, Chief Konz never heard back from Van Heel. Konz says he talked to Fr. Mel Taylor, who informed the Abbot at St. John's and Dan Ward, a priest at St. John's. Ward called Konz to say that Hoefgen was going to Saint Luke Institute, but would be made available to answer any charges that may be forthcoming.
- 3/22/84 Hoefgen admitted to Saint Luke Institute.
- 3/23/84 Father Michael Peterson M.D. of Saint Luke Institute wrote Chief Konz. "My strong recommendation to Father Hoefgen and his religious superior, Father Jerome Theisen, of St. John's Abbey that he leave the State of Minnesota for the psychiatric evaluation immediately." "I would also

appreciate it if you could inform me as to the status of formal charges against Father Hoefgen subsequent to the formal statement he made to you and the County Police Officer.”

- 1985 Hoefgen re-assigned to Saint John’s Abbey.
- June 1985 US Bishops met at Saint John’s Abbey, discussed child abuse in executive session. Bishops received the Doyle, Peterson and Mouton Report.
- 7/12/85 Hoefgen granted faculties by Archbishop of Saint Paul Minneapolis, assigned Associate Pastor, Saint Boniface, Hastings, MN. (ARCH-9682)
- 1986 Memo from Stearns County DDA, Patrick Strom, explaining why Hofegen was not charged: “the allegations did not fit the statutes and the priest had completed treatment.”
- 1987 Archbishop John Roach merged Saint Boniface and Guardian Angels parishes into the new Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton.
- 1989-1992 Hoefgen sexually abused victim 4 in Hastings.
- 10/12/92 Letter from McDonough to Sister Chabinel Mathison OSU on request for Hoefgen faculties, “Sister I want to raise one issue of sensitivity. I do so in the context of real respect for Father Hoefgen’s gifts in contribution in ministry, and it is not my wish to perpetuate a “shame-based” approach to him. During the current sensitivities in our Archdiocese, however, I want to ask you to be sensitive in your promoting of the retreat...Father Hoefgen’s participation might prompt more of the press and public attention that nobody wants to being back down on him. I am deliberately being vague in this regard, but I simply ask you to exercise good judgment in your promotional materials.” (ARCH-9635)
- 10/28/92 Hoefgen was quietly removed from Hastings just prior to filing of civil lawsuit.
- 1992-2002 Hoefgen assigned as Guest master of St. John’s Abbey retreat house and Personnel Coordinator for St. John’s Abbey.
- 10/31/92 Letter from Abbot Theisen from Rome to McDonough. Father Mike Peterson at the St. Luke Institute said Hoefgen could take an assignment. “In fact, the only case we have had in the Archdiocese was that of an assistant at St. Bernard’s who allegedly abused someone in the early 1970s. And I believe this case has no foundation.” (ARCH-9673-9674)

10/31/92 Statement read at all Masses says Hoefgen was treated at the St. Luke Institute and received a positive recommendation from the psychological staff. (ARCH-9662-9663)

11/24/92 Letter from McDonough to Br. Paul Richards, OSB. "While I do not recall that any of the three of them (Theisen, Prior Jonathan, Dan Ward) used the particular phrase I did, all three of them spoke with embarrassment about what they saw as an oversight." (ARCH-9692)

12/16/92 Sister Lynnette Friesen SND to McDonough "I don't think disclosure is the remedy." (ARCH - 9661)

12/23/92 Archbishop Roach grants faculties for Hoefgen at Villa Maria. (ARCH-9657-9658)

2/9/93 Former Cold Spring Police Chief Konz testifies about the 1984 case against Hoefgen, saying, "as it turns out, it was a closed case when I took the paperwork to the county attorney. I expected to appear on my investigation but that never happened, so it was a closed case."

1992-2002 Hoefgen continued working at Villa Maria in Frontenac, assigned as Guest Master of Saint John's Abbey Guesthouse and Personnel Coordinator for Saint John's Abbey.

June 2002 Hoefgen is put on restriction.

4/5/11 Hoefgen wrote letter of apology to victim 2.

2011 Hofgen listed as one of the 17 monks with credible allegations of sexual abuse, exploitation, or misconduct posted by Saint John's Abbey.