

Father Lawrence Gibbs

He caused “scandal” even before he was ordained

Gave kids alcohol, told them they were “selfish” if they refused his advances

His career was littered with than 20 years of allegations and police investigations

Only removed by Imesch when a victim sued

Evidence of dozens of victims kept from law enforcement

He was later fired from state social worker job in MO when lawsuits went public

Described as a dumb, “not too bright” kid, Fr. Lawrence Gibbs was the “source of scandal” at parishes for years before his ordination. In 1971, Bishop Blanchette sent the deacon to psychiatrists and testing, and even his own Seminary Board recommended that Gibbs be washed-out of the diaconate or, at least, never ordained a priest.

Blanchette didn’t listen. Gibbs was ordained in 1973. By 1980, parents started to complain. Gibbs was giving kids alcohol and taking them on camping trips to his cabin. At the parish, he would scream at and humiliate altar boys and ask children to kiss his “boo-boos.” Another report says that Gibbs told a boy he was “selfish” when the child refused to remove his pants for the priest.

Even after reports of a police investigation in 1980, Blanchette kept Gibbs in parishes and did not reprimand the priest. What did, however, get Gibbs in trouble was being a “rebel” when it came to the Mass. Altar boys, many of whom may have been abused, began to refuse to serve his masses, which didn’t follow the required rituals. Complaints continued at Gibbs’ assignments throughout the 1980s.

By 1992, Gibbs was working as a campus minister at Joliet Junior College. He was removed when a victim filed the first sex abuse against Gibbs and the diocese. It’s only then that diocese officials began a serious investigation of the priest’s conduct. They found evidence of at least a dozen victims, but never turned that information over to police.

Gibbs left the priesthood to marry and moved to St. Louis, Missouri, where he still resides. He was removed from his state job as a social worker when allegations were made public.

TIMELINE OF DOCUMENTS - LAWRENCE GIBBS

- 4/29/71 Gibbs is described as “frightened kid – not too bright.” “Tensions possible source of scandal in parish.” No common sense – or judgment. Lacks appreciation of situation. Exaggerated importance of self – pompous. Cannot or will not accept direction.
- 2/22/71 Gibbs requests another assignment.

3/24/71 Blanchette met with Dc. Gibbs on 3/23 to discuss Gibbs' recent visits with a psychiatrist. Gibbs recently took a battery of tests from a doctor in Aurora (a psychologist). Gibbs was sent to psychiatrist due to reports from certain individuals at St. Ambrose and from certain priests at the Preaching Institute and also 2 priests who had conducted the institute indicated unsatisfactory work and confusion in Gibbs.

5/19/71 Fr. Cullen wrote to Ryan requesting a delay in the matter of terminating Gibbs from his assignment at St. Ambrose due to the fact that he will be transferred to a new assignment, but does request an abbreviated stay at St. Ambrose upon announcement of his transfer. "His case is not just another normal transfer."

10/14/71 Gibbs petitions for Ordination to the priesthood but is denied. The Seminary Board recommended 1) Laicization; 2) a leave of absence, in which he would work as a layman and then return to the extended diaconate; and 3) continue as a deacon indefinitely. Gibbs preferred to seek another Bishop before considering other alternatives. If this didn't work, he preferred remaining a deacon indefinitely.

5/12/73 – Ordained

5/14/73 – Associate Pastor, St. James, Glen Ellyn, IL

6/14/77 – Associate Pastor, Divine Savior, Downers Grove, IL

9/01/77 – Associate Pastor, Christ the King, Lombard, IL

6/02/80 A Christ the King Parishioner wrote to Imesch that pulling Gibbs out of the parish over "such totally ridiculous charges" of allegations of "improprieties regarding some youth in the parish made by parents" is not the right decision and asks Imesch to reconsider their decision.

7/03/80 A Christ the King Parishioner wrote to Imesch regarding the recent investigation concerning Gibbs and the boys. Parishioner has 2 sons who have spent weekends at Gibbs' cabin and find it hard to believe that nothing has been done, except to remove him from this parish. Concerned that he is working at another parish with young boys and thinks he need professional help before working around young people. (304)

7/18/80 – Associate Pastor, St. Joseph's, Lockport, IL

7/29/80 A concerned parent wrote to Imesch stating that her 14 y.o. son had been questioned by the police on 5/29 regarding Fr. Gibbs and a visit to Gibbs' cabin last summer and inappropriate behavior that had gone on there. (316)

11/05/80 Altar boys refuse to serve mass because Fr. Gibbs humiliates them by yelling at them for not serving mass properly, despite the fact that Gibbs continuously changes his mind on how he wants it done. He has also complained of getting a

“boo-boo” playing football, and then asks the grade school children to kiss his “boo-boo.” (352)

11/08/80 Gibbs gives altar boys wine. (355)

1982 According to a 1992 lawsuit, Gibbs sexually abused a minor at his cabin where he gave the boy alcohol and masturbated him. This took place several times between 1980 and 1987. (634)

9/01/82 – Associate Pastor, St. Mary’s Plainfield, IL

12/09/82 Fr. Charlie wrote to Gibbs stating that there is a mixture of positive and negative perceptions of Gibbs concerning his “lifestyle, behavioral patterns, and the rest.” Gibbs is a “rebel” doing things differently. He is unwilling to fully respond to the feelings of others, especially the teachers in the school. He lacks accountability and responsibility.

1/10/83 Fr. Charlie again wrote to Gibbs expressing that he should consider taking a leave of absence to come to grips with all the things that seem to be “bugging” him. Gibbs has deviated from the restrictions both bishops (Imesch & Ryan) have placed on him concerning liturgical practices and styles, doing it his own way and changing it so frequently and last minute, the altar boys no longer want to serve for him.

6/18/86 – Part-time Associate Pastor, St. Joseph’s, Rockdale, IL and Campus Minister, Joliet Junior College and North Central College, Naperville, IL

11/03/86 Memo summarizing a meeting with Gibbs on 10/31 wherein Gibbs shows no responsibility for any of the “difficulties that had arisen” at his previous three assignments. His current assignment was created specifically for him to allow him to exercise some of his particular talents and abilities.

1/22/88 – Temporary Administrator, Holy Cross, Joliet, IL

7/01/90 – Director, Campus Ministry

2/18/91 – St. Joseph, Rockdale, IL

6/19/91 – Campus Ministry, Elmhurst College and North Central College, IL and Resident at St. Peter and Paul, Naperville, IL

10/01/92 Kaffer met with Gibbs regarding a lawsuit. Kaffer suspended Gibbs and told him to not function as a priest until the matter is resolved.

10/09/92 Gibbs sent to St. Michael’s Center in St. Louis, MO for evaluation. In 1980, there were complaints from parents of inappropriate behavior, but police and/or States Attorney investigated and cleared Gibbs of an unlawful conduct. (651)

11/01/92 – Therapeutic Leave

- 12/16/92 Fr. Lennon met with victim of Gibbs who said he was doing fine. (662)
- 12/31/92 There have been serious reports of sexual abuse that allegedly took place several years ago involving Gibbs. A lawsuit is expected to be filed 1/04/93 regarding this. (666)
- 1/15/93 Interview of secretary at Christ the King. There were rumors that children had been “molested” that she refers to as “the allegations.” She does recall Gibbs being more attentive to children than any other associate. Gibbs was then transferred to St. Joseph’s in Lockport and she recalls rumors of subsequent “trouble” in Plainfield. Fr. Ryan was aware of the rumors, but kept quiet. (1172-1175)
- 2/02/93 A man comes forward that he was sexually abused by Gibbs when he was associate pastor at St. Joseph’s. While at the rectory prior to leaving, Gibbs asked the boy to take off his pants. The boy refused. Gibbs did not force him to do anything, but did chide him on the way home for being “selfish” for not doing what he asked him to do. (806)
- 3/01/93 Another victim comes forward. 20 years ago he was altar boy at St. Joseph’s in Glen Ellyn. The boy’s mother wanted to know what funds were available for psychological assistance for her son and the family. (841)
- 4/05/94 Spoke to the father of 2 boys that used to go to Gibbs’ cabin. They played “games” which consisted of: 1) Drinking by minors; 2) Strip poker; 3) Paddling on the behinds; and 4) Misc. items along that line. The family spoke with Fr. Lennon who stated he would take care of the matter. (1176-1177)
- 9/27/02 From 1976 through 1981, Gibbs sexually assaulted a boy on at least 3 separate occasions consisting of fondling, masturbating, and performed other sexual and lewd acts in his presence. (1075)
- 11/22/11 Decree of AB Daniel Conlon stating that he has received information which appears indicative that a serious offense has been committed by Gibbs who had been removed from ministry in 1992. A preliminary investigation was opened and a “cautious investigation” be undertaken concerning this allegation. (1191)