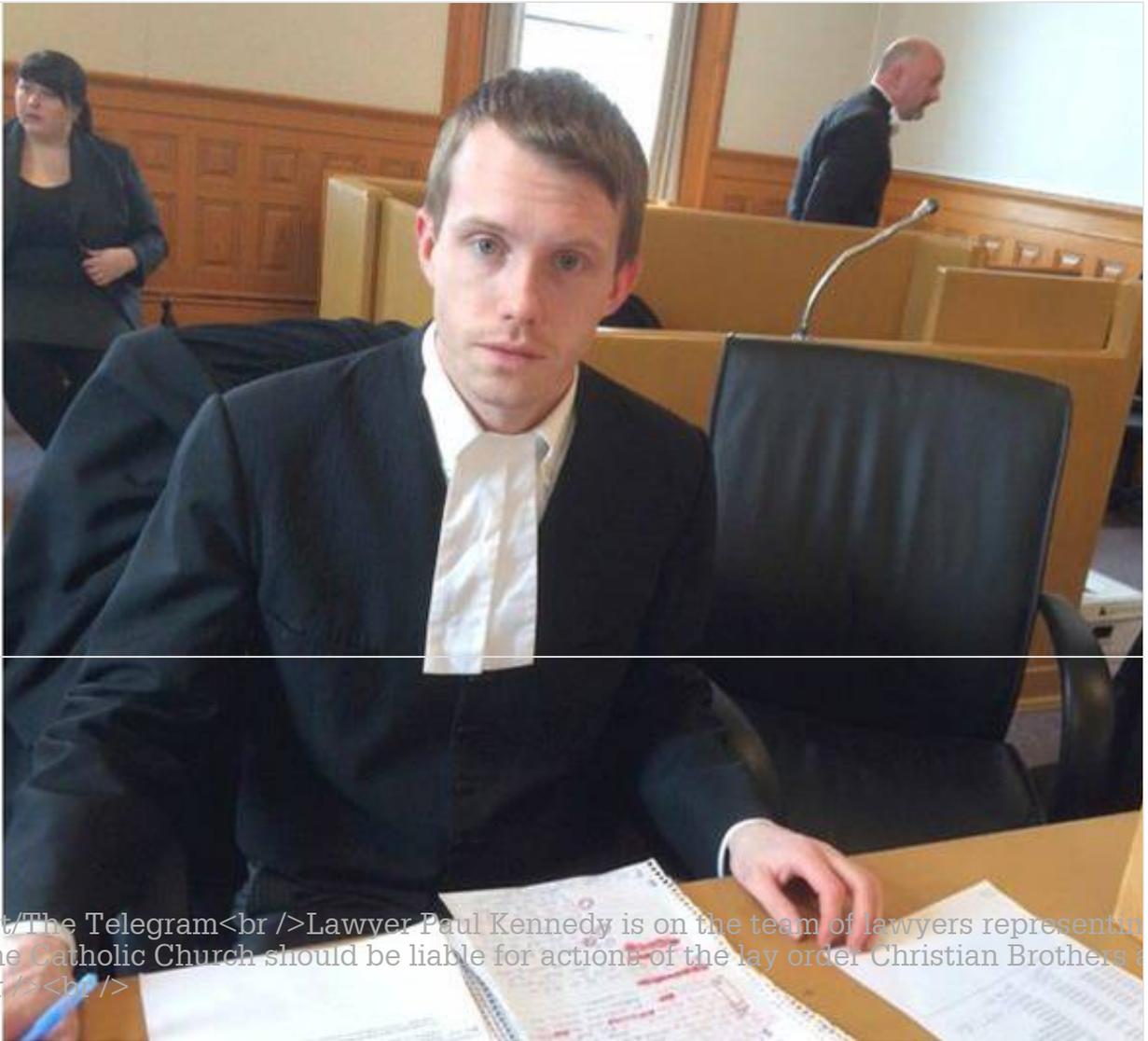


Brothers made rounds of boys in bunks

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Barb Sweet/The Telegram
Lawyer Paul Kennedy is on the team of lawyers representing who say the Catholic Church should be liable for actions of the lay order Christian Brothers at Cashel.

In excruciating testimony Wednesday at the Mount Cashel civil trial, a man in his late 70s told how he tried as a boy in the 1950s to get a Roman Catholic official to help orphanage residents who were being beaten constantly by Christian Brothers.

"We need help here," he said he pleaded to the official.

But while promises were made, nothing was done, the witness said in Newfoundland Supreme Court presided over by Justice Alphonsus Faour.

The Roman Catholic Church is now fighting four test cases, representing 60 claimants, because it says it did not operate the orphanage.

In cross examination, one of the church's lawyers, Chris Blom, pointed out the church official the witness spoke to as a boy may have been bound by confessional confidentiality rules and could not break that seal.

"Could be, yes," the witness said.

But the witness had also said that official was "the last resort" and he'd hoped the official could go to the Christian Brothers' superior and have a word about the beatings without mentioning names.

The man is the second former orphanage resident to testify in the trial in which abuse claimants assert that the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp. of St. John's should be liable for physical and sexual abuse of orphanage boys from the 1940s to 1960s by certain members of the Christian Brothers lay order.

In pleading the boys' case, the witness said he showed welts on his body to the high-ranked Christian Brothers' official.

This was after the man said he was belted by Christian Brother Ronald J. Lasik while he was nude and wet. He said Lasik, known by the boys to have a collection of straps, was frustrated because the boy had missed shower time for his class.

The man said there was something wrong with a grown man watching naked boys shower, referring to the Brothers who supervised the classes of boys during their turns in the shower room.

The man said he was late due to being at confession and told Lasik that, but didn't admit that he had walked a female friend down the road afterwards because lies brought even more severe beatings.

All the hot water was gone, but Lasik insisted that he shower anyway, and the boy was dipping in and out to brace himself from the frigid water.

"I was screaming like hell," he said of the atrocious pain of the five to eight hits he said Lasik belted to the boy's naked body.

The man said the constant beatings of boys at the facility were why he asked for help from the church official at confession.

He also testified about a mentally challenged boy who he saw whacked on the side of the head.

"I really got a sick feeling in my stomach," he said. "We all liked this kid."

Later, the man was among a group of five orphanage residents who went to a New Jersey college to train as Christian Brothers because they wanted to change things due to their experiences at the violent orphanage, he testified.

"Twice a day, just about every day, somewhere, somehow," he told claimants' lawyer Paul Kennedy when asked the frequency of beatings that could be witnessed at the orphanage.

But he said he did not have a calling and left the training after two years — it took several years to become a Christian Brother.

The Labrador man, who like other former residents testifying cannot be named due to a publication ban, said he was moody and angry in his marriage, but did not take it out on his "lovely" family.

He said terrifying dreams of the orphanage still haunt him, and Lasik is No. 1 in those nightmares.

"The possibility of us boys confiding in someone at the orphanage was nil," he said of the residents having no one to turn to.

Visits with relatives were supervised and if the boys went to a doctor or dentist with an injury, they were warned by the Brothers to make up an excuse and not report who beat them, he said.

By Blom's estimation from the witness's declarations as part of the trial process, he had suffered more than 4,000 beatings during his four years at the orphanage.

Sounds like a lot, said Blom.

"There was quite a bit," replied the witness.

As the man spoke in the morning, the attention of other former residents in the court audience were fixed on his testimony. But one said he noticed a church official across the aisle glance at a magazine and felt that inappropriate.

The third of the four former Mount Cashel boys to bear witness began his testimony Wednesday afternoon. Like the two men before him, he ended up in Mount Cashel after the death of his mother.

The St. John's-area man talked of his early days in the facility — beginning in 1949 — when there was mostly grub-filled porridge for breakfast, which is what the first witness had reported.

He said at first the boys would pick out the dead grubs, but that became a chore, so then they just ate it, grubs and all.

But the man's testimony turned to much darker events as he described the Christian Brother who would molest him at night when on duty as dorm supervisor — the Brothers took turns in that supervisory role.

The witness was a young teenager then in grades 7-9. The Brother would be quiet, "sneaking around," he said.

The witness said he would always try to get a top bunk at night, as he knew that was safer — it was easier to turn away from the Brother.

If the Brother was on duty, he would be "at my bunk," the witness said.

"I felt ashamed," the now elderly man said.

He also said the Brother made him apply suntan lotion to him at the pool.

He said he felt terrible because that did not seem like a normal thing to be doing.

Although he suggested the Brother made his rounds, he said none of the boys talked to each other about their abuse experiences at the time.

The trial continues Thursday. Look in print and online for full coverage and follow [bsweettweets](#) and [#mountcashelciviltrial](#) for live information from the courtroom.

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