

# Man says he told priest in confession of sexual incidents

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With a moaning sob, a shaking former Mount Cashel Orphanage resident covered his face at Newfoundland Supreme Court Friday morning.



The Mount Cashel Orphanage memorial site at the corner of Torbay Road and Howley Estates in the east end of St. John's Monday afternoon. — Photo by Joe Gibbons/The Telegram

"I don't know why I am doing this," said the 77-year-old Avalon Peninsula retired soldier, as he steeled himself to continue.

The man had said he loved band, but when his lawyer, Geoff Budden, asked him how he found the band instructor, the witness broke down.

Subsequently in his testimony in the Mount Cashel civil trial, he said he was molested one night by the bandleader, a Christian Brother he initially liked.

The Christian Brother he was referring to was John Evangelist Murphy. (Some background: in 2004, Murphy was sentenced to a 20-month conditional sentence to be served in his home community in New York state after being found guilty of four counts of indecent assault and being acquitted of one count of gross indecency and one count of indecent assault connected to his stint at Mount Cashel.)

Friday's witness at the ongoing civil trial said Murphy abused him just once — when he visited his bunk to talk about band, he reached under the blanket and the boy's pajamas and massaged his penis.

"I was shivering in the bed," he said of his shock.

After that, he said, Murphy turned cold to him.

And although he said he saw Murphy crouching down by other boys at their bunks on other occasions, he could not see what exactly was going on, if there were assaults or not.

However, he said his reaction to seeing him, or some other Brothers on their dorm duty nights, go to other boys' beds was, "I'm glad it's not me."

The man is the fourth claimant among four test cases that have been brought before the court, representing about 60 former residents at the orphanage from the 1940s to the 1960s. They say the Roman Catholic Episcopal Corp. of St. John's should be held liable for the sexual and physical abuse of boys by certain Christian Brothers during that period.

The Catholic Church insists it did not run the orphanage, and therefore is not responsible.

Friday's witness revealed he told a priest in confession about the incidents in which he was abused — twice by a man who regularly did electrical and other repair work there and ran the canteen, and once by the band instructor.

But he claims the priest just sat there stoically in the confession box, expressed no surprise at the details of what the boy said was done sexually to him and gave him his penance.

The witness said he went to confession weekly at the adjacent parish and spoke of the three incidents at the next confessional opportunity after they happened over a close time period when he was 13.

At the time, he said, because of church doctrine and preachings by the Brothers, he felt ashamed and guilty, blamed himself and thought he was a homosexual, which the Brothers had preached was a mortal sin.

Because of that, he thought he would go to hell, he said.

One day the worker offered him a free bar and pop, and locked the door of the canteen, he said. When the man began masturbating him, the witness said, he was shocked and did not know what to do, so he just ate the bar and drank the pop while it went on. The next time, the witness said, the act escalated to the man performing oral sex on the boy, and after that he stayed away from the canteen.

He characterized the Mount Cashel orphanage on first sight as a very scary, very creepy place, and said he and the other boys were always hungry and cold.

"There were no comforts," he said.

He wound up there after his father died in a hit-and-run accident, and his mother sent his sisters to the Belvedere girls' orphanage.

"There was no money," he said of the choice his mother was faced with.

The witness said he was 15 when he was late going back to the orphanage on Christmas Day 1955, as there had been a snowstorm while he was visiting his mother and grandmother downtown. He missed the evening curfew and tried to sneak in.

But he said Brother Ronald J. Lasik questioned him and, after they exchanged words, Lasik grabbed him by the throat. He said he was lifted so far up, with his feet dangling, he could see over the tall Christian Brother's head and feared if Lasik hit him, he would die.

He said his best friend — the trial's first witness — grabbed a chair and hit Lasik and a scuffle ensued. The next day, the witness said, the two boys were ordered out by the head Brother, who said their kind were not wanted.

A few times in his military career, the man got in trouble for incidents such as insubordination and being drunk and disorderly, which held him back from promotion, he said.

For the first 10 years of his military duty, he had a chip on his shoulder and would get in fights over even the suggestion of a slight, but was a good soldier when he wasn't drinking, he said.

"The whole point of drinking was just to blank it all out," he said of the abuse.

"There was no point in going and having a half dozen beer. It wasn't enough."

He said he now limits how many drinks he has on any occasion to one or two, channelling his energies into hobbies, but has never married or lived with anyone. He suggested his life is fine enough.

But he said he has no religious faith anymore, only a recognition of any people who are good.

"We were being taught religion an hour a day and it was all phony," he said, adding that the teachings at Mount Cashel by cruel Brothers stripped him of his faith.

The trial continues Monday, with the fourth witness to be cross-examined by counsel for the Roman Catholic church.

For live tweets from the courtroom Monday, follow @bsweettweets and #mountcashelciviltrial and look for updated stories online.

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## **Witness breaks down at Mount Cashel civil trial**

### **Man also says he told priest in confession of sexual incidents**

A former Mount Cashel orphanage resident broke down this morning in testimony at Newfoundland Supreme Court as he shook and covered his face.

"I don't know why I am doing this," said the 77-year-old Avalon Peninsula man, who is retired from the military.

The man had said he loved band, but when his lawyer Geoff Budden began asking him about the band instructor, the witness stopped and began shaking.

Subsequently in his testimony in the Mount Cashel civil trial, he said he was molested one night by the bandleader, a Christian Brother he initially liked.

The man is the fourth claimant among four test cases that have been brought before the civil court, representing about 60 former residents at the orphanage from the 1940s to the 1960s. They say the RC Episcopal Corp. of St. John's should be held liable for the sexual and physical abuse of boys by certain Christian Brothers during that period.

The Catholic Church says it did not run the orphanage, therefore is not responsible.

Today's witness revealed that he told a priest in confession about the incidents in which he was abused — twice by a electrician who regularly worked there and ran the canteen and once by the band instructor.

But he claims the priest just sat there stoically, expressed no surprise at the details of what the boy said was done sexually to him and gave him his penance.

The witness said he went to confession weekly and would have spoke of the three incidents at the next confessional opportunities after they happened when he was 13 — they occurred over a close time period, he said.

At the time he said, because of church doctrine and preachings by the Brothers, he felt ashamed and guilty himself and thought he was a homosexual, which the Brothers had preached was a mortal sin.

Because of that, he said he thought he was going to hell.

He characterized the Mount Cashel orphanage as a very scary, very creepy place where the boys were always hungry and cold.

'There were no comforts,' he said.

He wound up there after his father died after a hit and run accident and his mother sent his sisters to the Belvedere girls' orphanage.

"There was no money," he said of the choice his mother had to make.

The witness was 15 when he said he was late going back to the orphanage Christmas Day 1955, as there had been a snowstorm while he was visiting his mother and grandmother downtown. He missed the evening curfew and he said Brother Ronald J. Lasik grabbed him by the throat, lifting him off his chair. His feet were dangling and he feared if Lasik hit him, he would be dead. He said his best friend — the trial's first witness — grabbed a chair and hit Lasik. The next day the boys were ordered out by the head Brother and told their kind was not wanted, he said.

Look for expanded coverage in print and online Saturday.

For live tweets from the courtroom this afternoon, follow @bsweettweets and #mountcashelciviltrial