

**Father M. Lawrence (Larry) Reuter, S.J.**



Figure 1 - M. Lawrence Reuter, taken from <http://goodjesuitbadjesuit.blogspot.com/2010/05/we-are-heartbroken.html>

Father M. Lawrence Reuter, S.J. was affiliated with Loyola University Chicago from the late 1970s to 2010. He served on the university's board of trustees until 1990, when he was transferred from the presidency at Loyola Academy in Wilmette to serving in campus ministry both at Loyola University Chicago's Lake Shore Campus and at the Medical Campus.

Reuter was accused of at least two cases of sexual abuse that took place during his time as Loyola Academy president.

Both cases were settled in the 1990s. He was removed from public ministry in May 2010 and is said to be living in a Jesuit community.

Lawrence Reuter was born in 1940. Very few details of his personal life are accessible in the public record of the time before he entered the Jesuit order at age 18 in 1958. After twelve years of training, he was ordained to priesthood in 1971. The newly minted Jesuit priest's first assignment was at Loyola Academy in the northern Chicago suburb of Wilmette. Loyola Academy was at the time the Jesuit-run high school in the U.S. with the largest student body.<sup>1</sup> Reuter taught theology and English. He also took over the

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<sup>1</sup> "Loyola Academy Started in Chicago... and Settled in Wilmette," *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996), October 25, 1978.

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position of Loyola Academy's Director of Student Activities. The young priest quickly established himself as a well-liked teacher and mentor, rising in the faculty ranks. In 1973 he was voted the school's man of the year.<sup>2</sup> Two years after receiving this honor, Reuter became president of the academy. He would hold this position until 1990. In the late 1970s he also joined Loyola University Chicago's board of trustees, and remained there until 1989.<sup>3</sup>

According to Reuter's entry on the list of Jesuits who have been credibly accused of child sexual abuse, the first reported incident occurred in 1986, while he was on the Loyola University Chicago Board of Trustees, as well as President of Loyola Academy.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of more than a year, he repeatedly abused a student from his own high school. The publicly known details of this case are very sparse, leaving the details unclear. Yet in 2010, when Reuter openly admitted to the case, he and other Jesuit officials familiar with what had happened insisted that the student had not been a minor by the time Reuter began abusing him. If this student was indeed eighteen by the time the relationship began, if it indeed began in 1986 as reported on the Jesuit's list, the student would have graduated and left Loyola Academy within a year or two. After this first student left the academy in 1987 or 1988, Reuter became close to a second young man. About this case some more details are in the public record.

Reuter is accused of having had a mentoring relationship with another of his male students that escalated into sexual abuse. Over time the relationship between the

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<sup>2</sup> "Loyola Names Priest as Man of the Year," *Chicago Tribune* (1963-1996), August 16, 1973, sec. West.

<sup>3</sup> Loyola University Chicago, "Undergraduate Studies Course Catalog, 1983-1985," 1983, 12, [https://luc.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO\\_354b6e37-5d0b-4755-9126-0646b53e5b9f/](https://luc.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_354b6e37-5d0b-4755-9126-0646b53e5b9f/).

<sup>4</sup> The Society of Jesus - USA Midwest Province, "USA Midwest Province Jesuits with an Established Allegation of Sexual Abuse of a Minor" (The Society of Jesus, February 21, 2020), 9, [https://www.bishop-accountability.org/order\\_lists/Jesuits\\_Midwest/2020\\_02\\_21\\_Jesuits\\_Midwest\\_Established\\_Allegation\\_s.pdf](https://www.bishop-accountability.org/order_lists/Jesuits_Midwest/2020_02_21_Jesuits_Midwest_Established_Allegation_s.pdf).

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high school junior and the priest became closer. The former student said in 2010 that they became friends, but then Reuter began to increasingly cross boundaries, and “All of a sudden [a hug] became a kiss on the lips.”<sup>5</sup> Larry Reuter’s abuse was similar to many other Catholic priests who abused minors. He appears to have had only a very limited number of victims, and only began his abusive behavior decades after his ordination. But these numbers should be viewed with some scrutiny. Reuter began working at Loyola Academy as early as 1971. This means he had access to minors for over a decade before the first reported incident of child sexual abuse occurred. His record might be incomplete, and further survivors might still step forward in the future.

In 1990, Reuter was transferred from Loyola Academy to the Campus Ministry at Loyola University Chicago. Here, he remained active until his dismissal in 2010. The date of his referral to Loyola University Chicago could be no coincidence. Since Reuter’s files are not accessible to the public, the reasons for his transfer are not known. Most abusive Catholic priests and most abusive Jesuits were transferred away from the site of their transgressions after those became known to their superiors, a common pattern in the minor sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church, as legal scholar Jo Renee Formicola found.<sup>6</sup> Reuter was charged with child sexual abuse in 1990, but the case was settled, according to the Jesuits. These facts became public knowledge only in response to the 2010 withdrawal of the priest from public ministry. As with most abuse cases, here, too, the Catholic hierarchy, in this case the Jesuit order, played a crucial role in keeping accusations confidential. Leaving an accused priest in a position where he

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<sup>5</sup> Jullie Unruh, “2nd Loyola Academy Abuse Victim Comes Forward,” WGN Chicago, May 6, 2010, [https://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2010/05\\_06/2010\\_05\\_06\\_Unruh\\_2ndLoyola.htm](https://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2010/05_06/2010_05_06_Unruh_2ndLoyola.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Jo Renee Formicola, *Clerical Sexual Abuse: How the Crisis Changed US Catholic Church-State Relations*, First edition., Palgrave Studies in Religion, Politics, and Policy (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 51.

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worked with minors and young adults, however, meant to put students at risk for sexual abuse to happen. In the case of Reuter, he did not see any consequences for his crimes for decades. Regardless of the lawsuit and settlement in 1990, which without a doubt brought Reuter's case to his Jesuit superior's attention, he was allowed to maintain his status as priest.

When a new provincial took over the reigns of the Jesuits' Chicago Province in 2009 and began to look into the personnel files specifically for cases of child abuse, Fr. Timothy Kesicki noticed the entries in Larry Reuter's record. The times had changed, and the provincial would not turn a blind eye to the transgressors in his province like many of his predecessors had done. He ordered Reuter to be removed from active priesthood. In turn, the Archbishop of Chicago, Cardinal George also withdrew Reuter's priestly faculties, which meant that the priest was no longer allowed to give sacraments or say mass in the archdiocese of Chicago. He was also not to appear in public as a priest any longer, for instance, he was not to don the Roman collar.<sup>7</sup>

The media echo of Reuter's removal prompted another victim to speak out. Finding the Jesuits' public reaction to the revelation of Reuter's abuse lacking, he decided to step forward. The former Loyola Academy student revealed details about the abusive relationship the priest had engaged in with him to the public. The former student credited Reuter with having helped him a lot during his time in high school. But nonetheless, he asked for an apology for the abusive behavior he had to endure from him.<sup>8</sup> During the time of this new accusation, Reuter lived in the Chicago suburb of Oak

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<sup>7</sup> "Continued Abuse Revelations Belie Reform Claims, Say Victims, Dick Johnson and Bj Lutz, NBC Chicago, May 4, 2010," accessed October 21, 2021, [https://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2010/05\\_06/2010\\_05\\_04\\_Lutz\\_ContinuedAbuse.htm](https://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2010/05_06/2010_05_04_Lutz_ContinuedAbuse.htm).

<sup>8</sup> Jullie Unruh, "2nd Loyola Academy Abuse Victim Comes Forward."

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Park, working in campus ministry at Loyola University Chicago's medical campus in Maywood. On weekends he served as a priest at Ascension parish in Oak Park.

Ascension's main priest, Reverend Larry McNally, was devastated when Reuter first filled him in on the abuse case, and expressed that he was even further crushed when the second victim stepped forward soon after, since Reuter had insisted to him that he had only engaged in one inappropriate relationship.<sup>9</sup>

After his barring from public priesthood, Reuter was assigned to internal ministry, meaning that from 2010 onward he could only hold mass and give sacraments to other Jesuits in a closely monitored setting. Where he is residing at time of writing is not publicly known.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> "Ascensions Pastor Finds Himself Upfront and Center As the Sex Abuse Scandal Hits Close to Home, Ken Trainor, Wednesday Journal, May 12, 2010," accessed October 21, 2021, [https://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2010/05\\_06/2010\\_05\\_12\\_Trainor\\_AscensionsPastor.htm](https://www.bishop-accountability.org/news2010/05_06/2010_05_12_Trainor_AscensionsPastor.htm).

<sup>10</sup> Jeff Anderson & Associates PA, "The Anderson Report - Child Sexual Abuse in the Archdiocese and Dioceses in Illinois" (AndersonAdvocates.com, December 2019), 172, <https://www.andersonadvocates.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Child-Sexual-Abuse-in-the-Archdiocese-and-dioceses-in-Illinois.pdf>.