

## Employment Law

*Kathleen Gallagher Weichbrod and v. Father Paul A. Morel and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. and St. Bernadette*

**Facts:** Plaintiff Kathleen Weichbrod was sexually abused by her priest who was also her employer. She was a parishioner at St. Bernadette's Church and an employee at St. Bernadette's School. Father Morel had exhibited previous behavioral and emotional problems. She was forced to resign from her job.

**Allegations of Liability:** Defendant Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. had a duty to plaintiffs and all parishioners and employees to take care in hiring and retaining priests and to supervise them so that they would not endanger their parishioners and employees especially due to the esteemed and powerful positions they hold. This priest had exhibited and was treated for problems that could endanger parishioners/employees and was subsequently placed as associate pastor of a parish whose pastor was seriously ill and shortly thereafter passed away. The associate pastor was in charge and chose to abuse his power.

**Injuries and Damages:** Plaintiff sustained severe emotional distress and loss of her employment. Plaintiff's husband sustained severe emotional distress.

**Plaintiff Experts:** Merle Cantor Goldberg, LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) Silver Spring, MD; Jerome M. Staller, Ph.D. (Economist) Philadelphia, PA; Lee H. Haller, M.D. (Psychiatrist) Potomac, MD; Lee R. Minerv, (Vocational Rehab) Baltimore, MD; James W. Voell, M.D. (Psychiatrist) Silver Spring, MD

**Verdict/Settlement:** Confidentiality clause permits acknowledgment that the

matter has been resolved but precludes reference to any agreement or any payment.

**Special Remarks:** The faculties of the priest have been removed and the sexual harassment policies of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. have been reviewed.

**Plaintiff's Counsel:** Steven Van Grack (MILA Member), Van Grack, Axelson & Williamowsky, P.C., Rockville, MD

**Defense Counsel:** Kevin T. Baine, Williams and Connelly, Washington, D.C.