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Father Bill Lombardy accused of sexual abuse by former altar boys: suit

By Priscilla DeGregory

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Chess star Bobby Fischer of Brooklyn, NY in 1962.

AP Photo/John Lent

One-time priest and chess grandmaster Father Bill Lombardy — who was portrayed by actor Peter Sarsgaard in a movie about famed chess player Bobby Fischer — has been accused of sexually abusing two altar boys in a new lawsuit.

The now-deceased Lombardy — whose training of Fischer was depicted in the 2014 movie called “Pawn Sacrifice” — is accused in a Bronx Supreme Court lawsuit from last week of sexually assaulting two students in the 1960s, when he taught at St. Mary’s School in the Bronx.

Lombardy trained Fischer — whose character in the movie was played by Tobey Maguire — from age 11 through his historic win against Soviet Boris Spassky in the chess world championship in Iceland in 1972.

That same year, Lombardy allegedly lured 11-year-old Anthony Mazzucca under the pretext of teaching him about chess before sexually abusing him, the lawsuit — filed by Mazzucca and other alleged victim Joseph Telesca — claims.

Telesca says he was roughly 12 in the 7th or 8th grade in 1968 when Lombardy allegedly abused him on several occasions, according to the court documents.

Mazzucca and Telesca allege they were also sexually abused by another priest at the school, Raymond Foster, the court papers say.

When Mazzucca tried to alert the school of the abuse he allegedly faced at the hands of Foster, he was told “he would go to hell if he kept saying things like that,” and told to go back to class, the suit charges.

Lombardy and Foster were not named as defendants in the lawsuit.

Lombardy — who eventually left the church — died in 2017 at age 79, the court papers say.

Mazzucca and Telesca are suing the Archdiocese of New York and St. Mary’s for negligence claiming they should have had policies in place to better monitor, supervise and detect child abuse. They are suing for unspecified damages.

“Every diocese had a duty to be aware of what was going on at its own parishes and was not permitted to turn a blind eye,” plaintiff lawyer Andrew S. Janet said in a statement.

Foster could not immediately be reached for comment.

Church spokesman Joseph Zwilling declined to comment on the specific allegations in the lawsuit.

“The archdiocese takes all allegations of sexual abuse seriously, and responds with compassion and respect,” Zwilling said.

“We have also established strict policies that ensure that any cleric found to have committed an act of abuse of a minor is permanently removed from ministry, and instituted safe-environment training and procedures to prevent any future incidents of abuse.”

The men were able to bring their cases [under New York’s Child Victims Act](#) which allows victims of childhood abuse to file lawsuits regardless of whether their claims have since passed outside the statute of limitations.

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The CVA opened up a one-year look back window to bring such time-barred claims to court. That window has since been extended for a second year.

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