

Abusive priest sentenced to prison: Case was part of cover-up scandal

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Former Boston priest Paul Shanley has been sentenced to 12 to 15 years behind bars for raping a minor in a Catholic church. Shanley's was one of the more high-profile cases of offenders in the abuse and cover-up scandal in 2002.

Shanley, 74, faced a possible life sentence for abusing a boy, now a man of 27, at St. Jean's parish in Newton, Massachusetts, in the 1980s. The unnamed accuser said Shanley would pull him out of religious education classes and molest him over a course of six years.

"I want him to die in prison," the victim said in a statement read by prosecutor Lynne Rooney. "I hope it is slow and painful."

Judge Stephen Neel, in announcing the sentence February 15, said "it is difficult to imagine a more egregious misuse of trust and authority," according to the Associated Press. The victim's wife told Shanley in court that "no words can ever explain my disgust for you. You are a coward. You hid behind God."

Critics of the archdiocese said church leaders were told of accusations against Shanley and his advocacy of sex between men and boys but simply shuttled him from parish to parish, and later to a California diocese.

Shanley will be eligible for parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence and faces ten years' probation. His lawyer said Shanley would appeal the sentencing.

The other key figure in the Boston scandal, former priest John Geoghan, was murdered by another inmate in 2003 after he was convicted of molesting a ten-year-old.

Shanley's sentencing came shortly after a third notorious pedophile priest, James Porter, died of cancer February 11 in a Boston hospital. Porter pleaded guilty in 1993 to abusing 28 children in the Diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts. -*Religion News Service*