

Former Lawyer wins right to sue Catholic Church for £5m over Jesuit School Abuse

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A former lawyer has won the right to claim £5 million in compensation because he was sexually abused by a teacher at Preston Catholic College in Lancashire.

Patrick Raggett told the court he was subjected to years of abuse by Father Michael Spencer, a teacher at the college. As a result of the abuse he experienced years of under-achievement at work and a failed marriage, and succumbed to binge drinking.

In 2005 Mr Raggett had a breakdown which led to therapy , where he made the connection between his experience at school and the problems he suffered as an adult.

The governors of the college have denied liability, claiming that Mr Raggett's case should not proceed because he was outside the legal time limit to bring such a case. However, Mrs Justice Swift accepted Mr Raggett's evidence that father Spencer had sexually abused him several times a week over a four year period. She ruled that the case should go ahead to a full trial.

Mr Raggett has urged other victims of abuse to come forward. Many cases against the Church and other religious orders are usually settled out of court for relatively small amounts of money.

The case of Patrick Raggett has prompted suggestions that the Roman Catholic Church in Britain could now face numerous US style compensation claims. Last year in the United States the Roman Catholic Church paid out \$436 million for child abuse claims.

However, the legal system in the UK governing compensation claims is different to that of the United States and monetary compensation is unlikely to be large as in the US.

Child Abuse Lawyer Tracey Emmott of Pictons has welcomed the judgment. She comments: "Pictons has a specialist child abuse team who undertake cases for people who have been abused whilst in the care of the Church.

The abuse might be recent or in many cases have happened decades ago. The civil legal process is a way of seeking formal recognition and justice, and victims who embrace the litigation process often find it therapeutic. When claimants are successful they also achieve monetary compensation."

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