



The Church at Messines

Quis Seperabit

Keepers' priest Maskell spent time in Ireland, now under scrutiny

Public health officials in Ireland say they are reviewing the work history of the Catholic priest profiled in the Netflix series "[The Keepers](#)," who was employed as a psychologist in that country after leaving Baltimore amid sexual abuse allegations, The Baltimore Sun reported yesterday

The priest, [A. Joseph Maskell](#), worked in Wexford for about seven months in 1995 as a temporary clinical psychologist for an Irish public health board, according to the national health agency there. He later worked in private practice in Ireland between 1995 and 1998, church officials in Ireland say.

He died in 2001 at [St. Joseph Medical Center](#) in Towson.

The Health Service Executive, the agency that runs public health services in Ireland, said in a statement that it has begun a process to "review services delivered and regarding any concerns" about Maskell's employment with the public South Eastern Health Board.



Maskell, who served as chaplain and counselor at Keough, left the United States as allegations against him mounted in the 1990s. The Archdiocese has paid \$472,000 in settlements to 16 people who alleged abuse by Maskell. He was never criminally charged, and denied abuse accusations before his death.

The review comes in the wake of publicity from the seven-part Netflix documentary "The Keepers." The series examines sexual abuse at Archbishop Keough High School and the unsolved 1969 homicide of 26-year-old Sister Catherine Ann Cesnik, who taught there.

In a statement, the Health Service agency said Maskell worked for the South Eastern Health Board between April and November 1995. The

agency said that as part of the hiring process, Irish police checked whether he had any prior convictions. He did not.

Asked whether Maskell assessed any children or teens while working for the health board, a spokesman for the agency said it could not provide any additional information pending the outcome of the review.

Baltimore church officials have said they barred Maskell from public ministry in 1994 and that he went to Ireland without their knowledge. They said they learned in 1996 he was living in Wexford.

Maskell was born in Baltimore, but his family was from Ireland, said Baltimore archdiocese spokesman Sean Caine.

Teresa Lancaster, who was featured in "The Keepers" as an abuse survivor, said Maskell spoke about Ireland when he was working at Archbishop Keough.

"When he took me to the rectory, he would put on Irish music and tell me how wonderful it was," Lancaster said.



Catherine Cesnik, a 26-year-old nun, disappeared after leaving her Southwest Baltimore apartment to go shopping in November 1969. Two months later, her body was found in a frozen field in Baltimore County. [Catherine Cesnik case:](#)

Baltimore attorney Joanne Suder, who has represented people with abuse claims against Maskell in recent years, said she has received numerous phone calls about him since "The Keepers" was released. She said three people with knowledge of his time in Ireland have told her that Maskell presented himself as both a psychologist and a priest and that "he had access to young girls."

"That's frightening," she said.

Maskell also celebrated Mass in Ireland even though he had been prohibited from public ministry in the United States, Irish church authorities told The Baltimore Sun.

The Rev. John Carroll, a spokesman for the Diocese of Ferns, said in a statement that Maskell first had contact with diocesan officials there in 1995 when they discovered he celebrated Mass as a substitute for a priest who was ill.

After being contacted by the Ferns diocese, Maskell replied in a letter in April 1995.

"I wish only to offer Mass privately and carry out my spiritual activities in a like manner," Maskell wrote, according to Carroll.

The diocese sent a follow-up letter to Maskell asking for confirmation of his status as a priest, but received no response, Carroll said.

In June 1996, the Diocese of Ferns contacted the Archdiocese of Baltimore to clarify Maskell's status as a priest.

"Baltimore explained to Ferns that serious allegations had surfaced regarding Fr. Maskell prior to his departure from that diocese in 1994," Carroll said in the statement. "Baltimore stated

that it had been unaware of Fr. Maskell's current whereabouts. Baltimore immediately contacted Fr. Maskell and restated its prohibition on his ministering in public."

The Ferns diocese also contacted the health board in Ireland and "aired its anxieties" about Maskell's work as a psychologist, Carroll said.

The health board said that by the time it received correspondence from the diocese, Maskell was no longer working for the health board. But the file shows Maskell was working as a psychologist in private practice, according to Carroll.

Maskell worked privately in Wexford and Castlebridge from 1995 to 1998, Carroll said, and on occasion presented himself as a priest.

The Ferns diocese's file on Maskell, which has not been released publicly, covers a period from April 19, 1995, to Sept. 22, 1998, Carroll said. It is not clear from the file when Maskell arrived in Wexford and when he departed, he said.

Carroll said the Ferns diocese has not received any allegations of abuse by Maskell.

In the United States, there have been calls for the Archdiocese of Baltimore to release its files

on Maskell, but church officials say they will not do so. An online petition posted on the website [change.org](https://www.change.org) has garnered more than 6,400 signatures.

The petition says releasing the files would "restore public trust in the Archdiocese, and confirm the Archdiocese statements regarding their handling of the sexual abuse claims."

Caine, the spokesman for the archdiocese, said state law and archdiocesan policy would prevent the church from releasing the documents because they contain confidential information such as the names of sexual abuse victims, personnel and health records, and attorney-client communications.

The Catholic Church in Ireland has grappled with its own clergy abuse. A series of reports commissioned by the Irish government detailed cases of abuse involving children, and found that police and church leaders covered it up.

In an "Ask Me Anything" forum on the social networking site Reddit, "The Keepers" director Ryan White was asked last month if he would consider doing a second season of the documentary investigating Maskell's time in Ireland. White said there are currently no plans

for that, but he has been following press accounts in Ireland.

"I'm very afraid of what they're finding out — we know he was masking as a family psychologist and operating still as a priest — so it's chilling to think he still had access to children," White said in the Reddit exchange.

In the Reddit forum, White also called upon the Baltimore archdiocese to release its files on Maskell, saying it could redact personal information contained in the files.

Anglican environmental group expresses sorrow at Trump decision on Paris deal

The Anglican Communion Environmental Network has added its voice to those condemning President Donald Trump for deciding to withdraw the United States from the Paris climate agreement.

“We know that our brothers and sisters on every continent are already experiencing the damaging and sometimes catastrophic effects of climate change,” the network said. “We call on fellow Christians and all people of faith in the USA to



hear the voices of their brothers and sisters who are already impacted by climate change. Our faith calls us to feed the hungry. Today, this means halting those actions which are causing hunger and starvation.”

Pope to host bishops from crisis-hit Venezuela

Pope Francis will host bishops from Venezuela later this week as political unrest in the South American country continues into its third month.

The pontiff will host the Presidential Council of the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela at the Vatican during a private meeting on Thursday.



The Director of the Holy See Press Office, Greg Burke, said: "The encounter was requested by the Episcopal Conference itself, which desires to speak to the Pope about the situation in Venezuela."

Dozens of people have died in protests and violence which has been rocking Venezuela since the beginning of April this year. Hundreds more have been injured.

Previous discussions brokered by the Vatican between Socialist leader Nicolas Maduro and opposition leaders broke down. Opposition leaders have accused Maduro of leading a dictatorship and have demanded elections.

The pope recently expressed concern about the situation in Venezuela. Addressing crowds in St Peter's Square in late April, he warned of a "grave humanitarian, social, political and economic crisis that is exhausting the population".

The Reuters news agency reports that the unrest has fuelled food and medicine shortages which have affected millions of people.

A meeting of representatives from 33 countries belonging to the Organisation of American States to discuss the situation ended in Washington, USA last week without an agreement. Venezuela refused to attend. Protestors took to the streets of Caracas.

Today in Christian History, June 7

June 7, 1099: The First Crusade reaches Jerusalem

June 7, 1502: Ugo Buoncompagni is born in Bologna. As Pope Gregory XIII (1572-1585), he issued the Gregorian calendar, supported the Inquisition, promoted the Counter-Reformation, and encouraged missions.

June 7, 1891: English Baptist Charles H. Spurgeon, who preached to (on average) 6,000 people at each of his services, delivers his last sermon at London's Metropolitan Tabernacle .

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