



## The Burning Bush—Online article archive

### Defrocked priest gets 12 to 15 years for sexual abuse



**Paul Shanley is led away in handcuffs and shackles**

**A defrocked US priest, Paul R. Shanley was sentenced for 12 to 15 years in prison before a roomful of alleged clergy sexual abuse victims, who declared the conclusion to his criminal trial a step toward collective justice.**

Shanley was a central figure in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston's clergy sexual abuse scandal. When he was led away in leg shackles and handcuffs, a brief burst of applause was heard in the Middlesex Superior courtroom. Shanley's accuser, a 27-year-old firefighter, was greeted with hugs, handshakes, and gratitude. The victim is a hero, said Arthur Austin, 56, who says he was also attacked by Shanley as a young man.

The courtroom was fuller than it was during Shanley's two-week trial, largely with alleged victims like Austin, who could not press charges because of the statute of limitations — too much time had passed since the crime had taken place and a complaint being made by the victim.

In a statement read by prosecutor Lynn Rooney, the victim pleaded with the judge for a hefty sentence and suggested that he was asking on behalf of many others. "That pervert has victimized many, many people," the victim wrote. "Don't deny them their justice, too." For Shanley, the man had a pointed wish: "I want him to die in prison. Whether it's of natural causes or otherwise. However he dies, I hope it's slow and painful!" The man's wife and father also spoke, accusing Shanley of destroying his victim's faith. The accuser's wife, 23, said her husband refuses to step inside a church for a wedding, funeral, or christening. She called Shanley "a coward who hid behind God." "No matter how many private pleas you make to God for forgiveness, he will see through you," she said. "You are sick to your core."

Shanley, 74, a former "street priest" known for his ministry to troubled youth, was also convicted of two counts of child rape and two counts of indecent assault and battery against a child. The charges stemmed from the early 1980s, when he was a parish priest at St. Jean's Church in Newton, where his victim was a Sunday school student. Prosecutors had asked for a sentence of life in prison.

Shanley's defence lawyer, Frank Mondano, said yesterday that a fair trial was impossible because of the sexual abuse scandal. Mondano sought a lesser sentence in a county house of correction, arguing that Shanley had health problems, no criminal record, and no likelihood of being a security risk.



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Just as notorious and as wicked as the crimes of Shanley were the repeated attempts to cover over the crimes against their own people by the authorities in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. At every stage of the investigation, every possible denial, obstruction and evil attempt to hinder justice was undertaken by leading clerics.

The full story may be read in [this Boston Globe feature](#).