

# Reverend Robert E. Spangenberg, C.S.Sp.

## Biographical Information

YEAR OF BIRTH:	1947
YEAR OF DEATH:	2006
ORDINATION:	June 15, 1974

## Employment/Assignment History

1974	Faculty, Holy Ghost Preparatory School, Bensalem, PA
N/A	Associate Pastor, St. Mary Detroit, MI
N/A – 1977	Associate Pastor, St. Anthony Millvale, PA
1977 – 1979	Unknown ministry, North Carolina
1979 – 1980	Assistant Pastor, St. Mary, Sharpsburg, PA
1980 – N/A	Chaplain, St. Francis de Sale High School, Chicago, IL
1982 – 1984	Pastor, St. Stanislaus, Pittsburgh, PA
1984 – 1989	Pastor, St. Anthony, Millvale, PA
1989 – 1990	Superior of the Congregation Retirement home, Sarasota, FL
1990 – 1993	Pastor, St. Patrick, Charleston, SC
1993 – N/A	Administrator, St. Peter Claver, Philadelphia, PA
1994 - N/A	Pastor, St. James, Hamlet, NC
1997 – N/A	Pastor, Epiphany, Pittsburgh, PA
2002	Director of Retirement community, Sarasota, FL
2003	Retired

## Summary

Father Robert E. Spangenberg professed vows to *The Congregation of the Holy Spirit Province of the United States Order*, also known as the *Spiritans* which is based in Bethel Park.

Much of the information recounted here was discovered through newspaper articles and Spangenberg's own obituary. The documents provided by the Diocese of Pittsburgh revealed that Spangenberg was involved with at least two children, possibly more. Since Spangenberg's holy obligation was to the Spiritans, the Diocese had very few documents on his ministry.

The Diocese was first notified that there was a problem with Spangenberg's ministry in 1988. At that time, a woman wrote to the Diocese and to the Vatican in order to obtain help for her son. She named Spangenberg as her son's abuser and stated that another priest from Spangenberg's order was helping them with counseling. She wrote that she was upset that her letter was simply "noted" and that she has not heard from anyone regarding the matter since.

The priest that was giving counseling to the boy's family was Father Norman E. Bevan, C.S.Sp from Spangenberg's holy order. In Spangenberg's file, there was a letter dated January 12, 1989, that Bevan wrote to the Father Theodore Rutowski, Associate General Secretary for

## Summary

the Diocese. He reported that they had investigated the issue and were enclosing a report of their findings. Although the Spiritans did not take the accusation by the victim's family serious enough to remove him, they did reassign Spangenberg to a retirement home in Florida shortly thereafter. Bevan wrote,

*If we felt them to be true, we would recognize our responsibility to remove Father X from ministry and to insist on therapeutic rehabilitation. At the same time, we realize that a priest's reputation could be irreparably damaged by false accusations.*

No report on the Spiritans findings were included in Spangenberg's file to the Grand Jury.

On March 9, 1989, Bevan wrote a letter to the boy's family wherein he stated that he had spoken with both Spangenberg and the boy about the incident or incidents. He mentioned the responsibility of the church and that their failure to act could hold them culpable for not responding. He referred several times to the fact that the incident was more than five years old. Later in the letter, Bevan stated, "*Excessive use of alcohol contributed significantly to clouding the judgment and perception and further exacerbates the reliability of memory both at the time of the alleged incident.*" He acknowledged that "*I do believe that Father Spangenberg exercised questionable judgment.*"

In 2009, an adult male reported that when he was 15 to 16 years of age, he and Spangenberg engaged in many types of sexual encounters. The boy reported that he was involved in street prostitution with young boys known as "*Hustlers.*" He was befriended by Spangenberg during this period and Spangenberg actually promoted the activity by engaging the boy in a sexual activities after he ran away from home. Spangenberg also paid the boy a finder's fee for him to locate younger hustlers (known as "*Chickens*") to have sex with Spangenberg.

The boy reported that Spangenberg enjoyed using "*huff*" (sniffing glue) while Spangenberg performed oral sex on him. Additionally, Spangenberg would pay for his sexual services with money from the collection box (typically one dollar bills) and would even pay the boy in drugs and alcohol. In a note in the Diocesan files, it was documented that the boy thought Spangenberg was a "*really sick guy – he would have person urinate and defecate on him.*"

The Diocese and the Spiritans continue to share financial responsibility for the cost of the male's therapy, medication, job searches, criminal court costs and assistance with child support.