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Former Iona College President Brother James Liguori Named in Child Sex Abuse Suit

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By [Robert Cox](#) on *Thu, 07/19/2012 - 16:24* [Education](#)



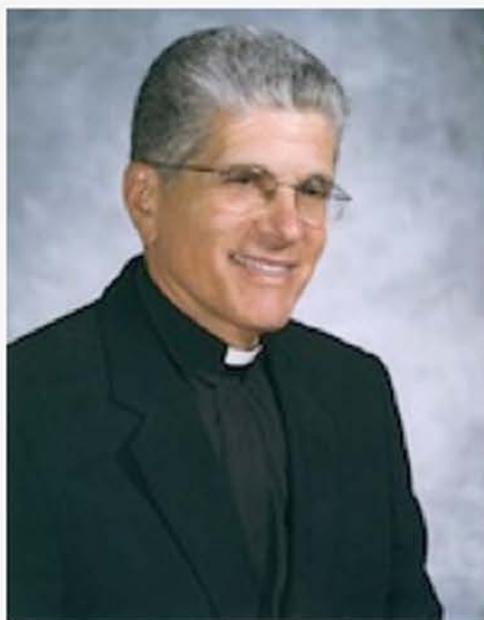
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Points:

A California man has filed a lawsuit claiming he was sexually abused by Brother James A. Liguori, C.F.C., Ed.D in 1969 when the boy at a Cardinal Farley Military

Academy in in Rhinebeck, N.Y. The school was run by the Irish Christian Brothers, a New Rochelle-based Catholic religious order.

Brother Liguori is a member of the Irish Christian Brothers. For 17 years, up until 2011, he served as President of Iona College. He is currently an Associate Vice President at Fordham University where he serves as the Executive Director for Westchester. Fordham is a Catholic University run by the The Society of Jesus, the order of Jesuit priests.



Brother James A. Liguori

According to a [press statement issued by Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests \(SNAP\)](#), an independent, confidential network of survivors of religious sexual abuse and their supporters, the man reported his abuse to church officials in Orange County, CA in 2008. Catholic staffers, including Bishop Tod Brown, met with him and, in emails, a lawyer for the diocese said that she believed his allegations.

The Irish Christian Brothers, however, claimed that the allegations were "without merit" and took no action against Liguori who was, at the time, of the victim's report, the president of Iona College in New Rochelle.

The Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America issued a statement:

In his 52 years of service in the order, there was one claim filed against him in 2008. This allegation was swiftly and thoroughly investigated by an external agency, which found the allegation to be unsubstantiated due to major inconsistencies -- including witnesses, whom the complainant provided to investigators and said would corroborate his allegation, who did not corroborate the allegation. An independent external review board accepted the report of the outside investigator and, because the allegation was determined to be unsubstantiated, did not require him to be removed from ministry. As for the apparent allegations circulating on the Internet, we have not seen this claim and therefore cannot comment.

Iona College has [issued a statement](#):

Through an Internet posting, we recently learned of a lawsuit alleging child abuse by former President, Brother James A. Liguori whose employment at the College concluded on September 26, 2011. The College has not seen the lawsuit and therefore cannot comment at this time; instead, it refers questions about the suit to the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America. Our heartfelt sympathy and prayers are in support of any victim of sex abuse and their family.

Iona College, founded in the tradition of the Blessed Edmund Rice, has been independent since 1947. The College is not part of the Edmund Rice Christian Brothers North America and is in no way connected to their bankruptcy filing and related allegations.

Talk of the Sound has obtained a copy of two letters from 2008, one sent to Brother Liguori and the other sent to President of the Board of Trustees of Iona College:

July 5, 2008

James A. Liguori, C.F.C., Ed.D.
President, Iona College
715 North Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10801

Dear Br. Liguori:

I am writing to report that our agency, which provides assistance to survivors of clergy and religious abuse, has been contacted by a gentleman who claims to have been sexually abused by you in the 1960's. I am in receipt of the victim's memorandum and statement.

The abuse is alleged to have occurred at Cardinal Farley Military Academy in Dutchess County, New York, when the survivor was a student and you were residing in a student dormitory. Evidently, the Christian Brothers have judged the survivor's story to be credible enough to send a private investigator to interview him.

I, too, have had extensive conversations with the survivor, and my experience indicates that the victim is credible. I am sure you have been apprised of this action, and my sources advise me that you are refusing to be interviewed on advice of counsel.

I would ask you to step down as President of Iona College while the credible allegations of the survivor are investigated. The student body of Iona College is not safe as long as its leader is an alleged sexual abuser of minors.

I urge your immediate action regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

Rev. Robert M. Hoatson, Ph.D.
Founder and President

CC: Br. Hugh O'Neill, CFC, North American Province Leader
Rev. Kenneth E. Lasch, J.C.D., Co-Founder of "Road to Recovery"

July 5, 2008

Patrick J. Lynch
President, Board of Trustees
Iona College
715 North Avenue
New Rochelle, NY 10801

Dear Mr. Lynch:

I am writing to provide you with a copy of a letter I have forwarded to Iona's President, James A. Liguori, C.F.C., Ed.D. It concerns allegations of sexual abuse of a minor against Br. Liguori. Our agency provides assistance to those who have been sexually abused by clergy and religious. The victim was a student at Cardinal Farley Military Academy in Dutchess County, New York when the alleged abuse occurred, and Br. Liguori was stationed there at the time.

The gentleman who has made the allegations against James Liguori has contacted "Road to Recovery" and we are providing him support. It is our recommendation to the Board of Trustees of Iona College that Br. Liguori be relieved of his duties immediately pending the results of the investigation being carried out by the Christian Brothers and its private investigator.

In addition, our agency is working with a man who alleges abuse by Br. John J. O'Connor, C.F.C., Ed.D. The victim alleges that he was sexually abused by O'Connor at Cardinal Hayes High School in the Bronx, New York, many years ago. Br. O'Connor supposedly has been removed from ministry by the Christian Brothers, but he continues to be listed as a member of the Board of Trustees of Iona College. Our recommendation is that Br. O'Connor be removed as a trustee in concert with his "removal" by the Christian Brothers.

Road to Recovery, Inc. serving hundreds of survivors of clergy and religious sexual abuse, urges your immediate action regarding these matters.

Sincerely,

Rev. Robert M. Hoatson, Ph.D., Iona '75
Founder and President

CC: Br. Hugh O'Neill, North American Province Leader
Rev. Kenneth E. Lasch, J.C.D., Co-Founder of "Road to Recovery,
Inc."

"It's not often that church officials come out and say that they believe a victim," said Joelle Casteix, western regional director of SNAP, the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAPnetwork.org), the nation's largest support group for men and women sexually abused as children in religious and institutional settings. "But then to have the Irish Christian Brothers instantly claim the allegations were without merit and refuse to reach out to other potential victims is reckless and callous."

Last year, the Irish Christian Brothers declared bankruptcy in light of more than 50 child sex abuse lawsuits in the United States and more than 200 in Canada.

<http://www.irishcentral.com/news/Mounting-sexual-abuse-claims-causes-US-....> The order has also been rocked by sex abuse scandals in Ireland.

In January, the New York Bankruptcy Court set a "bar date" of August 1, 2012, for all victims of Irish Brother predators to expose their abusers in court. After that, many victims of the Irish Christian Brothers will no longer have rights in the courts. Doe came forward and filed his sex abuse claim as part of this bankruptcy.

Liguori was the president of Iona College for 17 years. Before that, he was the school's executive vice president, the principal of Rice High School in Harlem, headmaster of Iona Prep, associate superintendent of schools in the New York Archdiocese and the superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of Newark. <http://www.cny.org/stories/Brother-Liguori-Retiring-as-Iona-President-Le...>

SNAP wants the Irish Christian Brothers to reach out to alums from every school where Liguori and other accused clerics taught and help other potential victims. before the August 1 deadline.

In 2010, Sister Marie Thornton, a nun and the school's vice president of finance for the school, embezzled more than \$800,000 from Iona. Liguori and school officials did not call law enforcement to report the matter. The incident came to light through reporting by Talk of the Sound and the Chronicle for Higher Education.

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