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Victims talk about how former Anglican priest destroyed their innocence — WATCH THIS SITE FOR SENTENCING STORY TODAY

Posted By LINDA RICHARDSON, THE SAULT STAR

Updated 8 months ago

One by one the five middle-aged women faced the former Anglican priest who molested them when they were young children.

"I've been waiting for 40 years to put into words the fear, hurt and anger you brought to my life," one of Kenneth Gibbs' victims told the 77-year-old man.

"God created a child that you destroyed," she said Wednesday looking directly at Gibbs, who was sitting in a wheelchair next to the prisoner's box.

"When your turn comes there is a special place waiting for you on the dark side," another said, telling Gibbs he was a pedophile who had hid in the church.

"Shame on the Anglican church for moving you from town to town and church to church," she said during the Belleville resident's sentencing hearing.

Gibbs was convicted in November of eight counts of indecent assault, offences that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s when he was a minister at churches in Chapleau and Elliot Lake.

A court order prohibits reporting any evidence that might identify the victims.

Sometimes shaking or pausing to fight back tears, the five women detailed the emotional, psychological and physical harm they have suffered because of Gibbs' actions.

They talked about guilt and shame, a loss of trust and childhood innocence, about struggling with adult relationships, and about being highly protective of their own children,

Gibbs destroyed her spirit, one of the victims told Superior Court Justice Edward Koke.

"I have no spiritual foundation to base my life on," she said. "I've never returned to church."

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HORNEPAYNE CENTRE, 42 DAYS, TWENTY-NINE FOR BANK

There are only forty-two days left before the Hornepayne Town Centre closes its doors, and even less, twenty-nine days before the CIBC Bank pulls up stake and moves all accounts left to its Branch in Hearst. While both events have mostly

The Melodic Noise of 'Glee'

Once upon a time, high school drama was bleak and boring with the common jocks vs. geeks plot taking up most of preteen entertainment. But then, Disney came up with the "he said, she said" tale choreographed to the tune of sappy and snappy slightly passable pop songs. In a post High School Mus

soup kitchen

A great article on Emile Philips and the Soup Kitchen. I have been away from the Sault for many years. I have known of the Soup Kitchen and am happy to see they are still doing their good works.

ALL THIS MAKES YOU WONDER

There have been two announcements in the "Soo News" this summer out of MPP Oraziotti's office, concerning millions for the north and in particular Sault St. Marie Ontario. The first notice said \$90 million for Northern job creation, infrastructure and commun

HORNEPAYNE TOWN COMPLEX UPDATE

Although there is not much to update on Plan "A" of the Hornepayne Town Centre, which would be the sale of the complete building, a local Economic Development Committee has made some progress with Plan "B", which is to sever the Apartment

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During a nine-day trial in September, the women described incidents where Gibbs fondled their breasts or vagina or exposed himself when they were children.

Gibbs served as minister of St. John's Anglican Church in Chapleau from 1966 to 1971 and was at St. Peter the Apostle Church in Elliot Lake from 1971 to 1980.

On Wednesday, after the women read their victim impact statements, Koke heard sentencing submissions from the Crown and defence.

Prosecutor Mike Kelly called for a five-to-seven-year federal prison term.

As a priest, Gibbs was automatically granted trust, not only by the victims, but by parents, the assistant Crown attorney said.

"When you see the pattern of abusing children at the church or in his rectory, week after week after week, there has to be a significant amount of premeditation, knowing they were going to come back and he was going to prey on them."

Defence counsel Andre Berthelot urged the judge to impose a sentence of two years less a day, which Gibbs would serve in a provincial institution.

"The court must be mindful that any sentence imposed not amount to a life sentence," he said, adding this is a possibility given the man's advanced age and disabilities.

Gibbs has coronary artery disease and since 2004 has suffered from post polio syndrome, Berthelot said.

During other court appearances, Gibbs used a walker, but was in a wheelchair at Wednesday's hearing.

Berthelot filed letters and testimonials about the good work Gibbs has done over the years

"He has a record of service that is exemplary," the lawyer said. "It shouldn't be inferred that his purpose for going into the priesthood was to defile young women."

Kelly countered that the court should recognize that Gibbs' reputation in the community, prior to the trial, would not reflect he had sexually abused children because that had taken place in private.

Koke reserved his decision until today.

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