

IN THE CROWN COURT AT LEWES
Sitting at Brighton Magistrates' Court

Edwards Street
Brighton

Before

HIS HONOUR JUDGE ANTHONY

REGINA

- v -

ROBERT COLES

Details of counsel appearing on behalf of the Prosecution were not supplied

MR N SHAW appeared on behalf of the Defence

SENTENCING REMARKS
14th FEBRUARY 2013, 15.35-15.42

DPA

JUDGE ANTHONY: Robert Coles, you are now aged 71, and so were in your late thirties and early forties at the time of these offences, all of which were committed between 1979 and 1984. In the case of [Child A] and [Child B], they were aged 11, 12 and 13 when you offended against them, in the case of [Child C], he was 16.

You were an ordained Clergyman and Priest, and in each case, you insinuated yourselves – yourself into the good graces of the victims of your offending and of their families. In what was perhaps a slightly less cynical age, nobody seems to have suspected that you were anything other than the local priest acting in the best interests of your parishioners.

Having in modern parlance “groomed your victims”, you then proceeded to abuse them. In the case of [Child A] and [Child B], fortunately the degree of abuse was not so severe as it was to be in the case of [Child C], involving as it did, touching of the body and some kissing, but it was serious enough, undoubtedly, to amount both to indecent assault and to have caused long-lived – perhaps permanent – psychological scarring of both boys which has lasted into middle age.

In the case of [Child C] it was far worse. It involved getting him drunk and the masturbation of him by you, it involved your repeatedly requiring him to masturbate you, and in each case, masturbation was to ejaculation. It involved one case of non-consensual buggery, and he was to awake to find that you were inserting his penis into your anus. The effect on him has been dramatic. It is described in the victim impact statement that I have read – and which no doubt you have too – the effect on him undoubtedly has been life-long and extremely serious.

When you were first interviewed by the police in 1997, you made no comment. It appears that you may have made some limited confession of your behaviour to more senior churchmen, which although apparently, they raised the matter with the Child Protection Advisor for the Diocese, the confession such as it was, was not passed on to the police. It is not known at least by the CPS why that should be, may be that it was because by then you were on long-term sick leave, had resigned your position of Vicar of a parish in Eastbourne, and were in due course to take early retirement. Be that as it may, it was not until you appeared before the court late last year that you were, in due course, to admit fully your involvement in these matters.

I am urged to take into account your previous good character and your pleas of guilty, and of course I do so. I am urged to take into account also your age and to some extent, infirmity, but you are not so old that your age can make more than a slight

A difference, nor is the evidence of any medical condition such as to require more than minimal consideration. I am urged also to take into account remorse that is said to be genuine on your behalf. I am less convinced that remorse is genuine, rather that it may be the fact that you realise that you now face the consequences, that you are sorry for having been caught.

B You do fall to be sentenced for offences which have involved three different boys and three different families over a period spanning some five years, all of which involved grooming and worming your way into the confidence of the boys and their families, and all of which have, of course, involved the grossest possible breach of the trust imposed in you as the local Priest and Vicar. You have brought disgrace upon yourself and upon your cloth. It goes without saying for such behaviour for which there is, but for your C pleas and previous good character, and, if it be genuine, your remorse, in truth, no mitigation, there is no alternative but a substantial sentence of immediate imprisonment. I bear in mind as I must, the totality of the sentence, but for that, the sentences in respect of each boy would be longer, but it does appear to me to be appropriate that the sentences in respect of each boy should be consecutive.

D On counts 2, 3 and 4, the offences of indecent assault on [Child A], the sentence is one of 18 months on each concurrent. On counts 6, 7 and 8, the offences of indecent assault on [Child B], 18 months on each count concurrent, but consecutive to those on counts 2, 3 and 4. On count 10, the buggery of [Child C], five years' imprisonment E consecutive to those already passed. On counts 12, 14, 16 and 18, the offences of indecent assault on [Child C], two and a half years' imprisonment on each, concurrent with each other and with count 10, but as with the sentence on count 10, consecutive to those on the counts as previously sentenced. That amounts to a total of eight years' F imprisonment in all, of which you will have to serve half before being released on licence. Once you are released, if you re-offend or fail to comply with the terms of the licence, you are liable to be recalled to serve some or all of the balance. When you are released, because of the type of sentence and length of it, you will have to notify the police of your name, address and any change thereof, for the rest of your life. Further I shall make the G sexual offences prevention order as asked, in the terms asked, that too will last for the rest of your life. Take him down please.

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We hereby certify that the above is an accurate and complete record of the proceedings or part thereof.

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