

## ASIA PACIFIC

# Cleric Suspected of Child Abuse in US Jailed in Australia

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS JULY 24, 2015, 3:13 A.M. E.D.T.

MELBOURNE, Australia — An American clergyman suspected of child sexual abuse at a Pennsylvania school was sentenced on Friday to three years in an Australian prison for molesting three children in Melbourne more than 30 years ago.

Brother Bernard Hartman, 75, a member of the Roman Catholic Marianist religious order, had pleaded guilty in the Victoria state County Court in Melbourne in April to four counts of indecent assault involving two pre-teen sisters of male students at St. Paul's College in the late 1970s. A jury found him guilty in May of one count of indecent assault and two of common law assault for abusing a male student at the school in 1981-82.

Hartman had gained the trust of the girls' parents and abused them while he was invited to their family homes for dinner.

Judge James Parrish ordered one year of the sentence to be suspended, but Hartman will be supervised for three additional years after his release.

"You have breached the trust of those young girls with blatant offending in their homes ... which allowed little avenue for retreat," Parrish told Hartman while sentencing .

One of the girls was under 10 years old when Hartman would molest her while drawing pictures with her. She told prosecutors she would vomit when Hartman visited and could not trust anyone.

Hartman once used a turkey baster filled with liquid to violate the other girl.

Hartman is the subject of a credible allegation of abuse from when he taught at Pittsburgh's North Catholic High School, the city's Roman Catholic diocese said in April last year. That complaint had been turned over to authorities.

He is one of eight religious brothers accused of molesting 19 students at the school.

A former student at the school, since renamed Cardinal Wuerl North Catholic High School, came forward with a complaint against Hartman in March last year as the diocese was preparing a letter sent to North Catholic alumni to alert them to the Australian allegations.

Pittsburgh church officials said they were unaware of Hartman's past until then, even though his St. Louis-based religious order knew of the Australian allegations in 1997 and pulled him out of the Pittsburgh school.

Hartman taught science classes at North Catholic in 1961 and 1970, and then from 1986-97.

The Marianist Province of the United States has acknowledged removing Hartman from the Pittsburgh school without publicly explaining why.

The religious order said he has since been given treatment and barred from teaching under a "safety plan," during which he performed mostly clerical work, none of which involved children. For most of that time he lived in Dayton, Ohio.

The letter to North Catholic alumni last year prompted another 18 former students to level sex abuse allegations against another seven brothers who had worked or taught at North Catholic.

All but one of the former brothers are dead.

The head of the religious order that runs 19 high schools in the United States, Rev. Martin Solma, has apologized to the former students.

Hartman was a teacher and counsellor at the Australian school which has not been operated by the Marianists since 1985. He was extradited from the United States to Australia in 2013.

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This story corrects that female victims were sisters of students of the Australian college, not students.

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