

GARABEDIAN, from page 4

about 20, he said, he knew there would be many more.

Garabedian said he never doubted the victims he spoke with.

"They were just innocent little children who were damaged," he said.

Geoghan specifically targeted children from poor families, the Globe reported. The number of victims who said they were abused by Geoghan eventually climbed to about 150, according to the Globe. He was ultimately sentenced to nine to 10 years in prison for fondling a 10-year-old boy at a swimming pool and was murdered in his prison cell in 2003.

In 2002, the Globe's Spotlight investigation uncovered 70 pedophile priests and exposed how the Catholic Church protected them and covered up their crimes through secret settlements and confidentiality agreements.

"The Catholic Church has covered this matter up as much as possible," Garabedian said.

Despite the church's efforts, the floodgates had opened.

In 2004, a report filed by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops revealed more than 10,000 allegations of sexual abuse made against thousands of priests in the United States between 1950 and 2002.

Another 4,000 allegations have been made against priests in Australia and more than 300 in Canada, Germany, Ireland and Belgium, according to the John Jay College report. The Catholic Church has acknowledged 3,400 credible accusations received between 2004 and 2014.

In 2005, after having paid \$50 million to more than 100 victims of sexual abuse, the

Archdiocese of Portland declared bankruptcy. It concluded its bankruptcy reorganizing in 2007, ultimately spending more than \$70 million in claims to victims, according to the Catholic News Service. The Archdiocese of Portland was the first in the nation to declare bankruptcy as a result of the abuse cases, but others were soon to follow, including those in Tucson, Ariz., Spokane, Wash., and Fairbanks, Alaska. In May, the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis agreed to pay \$210 million to 450 victims of clergy sexual abuse as part of its bankruptcy settlement.

The church's victims come from diverse backgrounds, Garabedian said. Sexual abusers did not discriminate.

"It can be a very successful upper-class family that just trusts the priests when they shouldn't," Garabedian said.

Of the thousands of victims who Garabedian said have contacted him, the oldest was 86 and said he had been abused in 1937.

"Everyone in his life had died, so he felt as though he could talk about this without hurting those individuals," Garabedian said.

Just being able to talk about the abuse they

endured can be a relief to some of the victims, he said.

"It's taking a great weight off their shoulders so that they can realize that the sexual abuse was not their fault, and they shouldn't feel guilty, ashamed or embarrassed."

He said the weight sexual abuse victims carry with them "permeates every facet of their lives."

"It is a constant reminder of the evil that the priests perpetrated," Garabedian said.

Victims often go through a range of emotions as they begin to share their experiences.

"Some feel even sadder before they feel better," Garabedian said. "Others transform themselves into survivors and realize that

the sexual abuse was not their fault."

Not everyone has been able to overcome the tragedy they've endured, he said; many have committed suicide.

In 2012, Garabedian represented victims in Ohio who he said had been molested by Brother Stephen Baker, a Franciscan friar accused of sexually abusing dozens of teens in at least three states, according to the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. The settlements in that case resulted in Pennsylvania victims' coming forward, Garabedian said.

"I'm told that that sparked the (grand jury) investigation in Pennsylvania," Garabedian said.

And what the investigation in Pennsylvania uncovered was unprecedented, according to the grand jury report.

"There have been other reports about child sex abuse within the Catholic Church," the report stated. "But never on this scale."

The grand jury investigated every diocese in the state except Philadelphia and Altoona-Johnstown, which had been subject to previous grand jury investigations. Despite the extensive nature of the investigation, the grand jury concluded that its report was still not a complete picture of the abuse that occurred in Pennsylvania.

"We believe that the real number - of children whose records were lost, or who were afraid ever to come forward - is in the thousands," the report said.

About a dozen victims who were not included in the report have already reached out to Garabedian.

"I will be representing them with local counsel in Pennsylvania," he said.

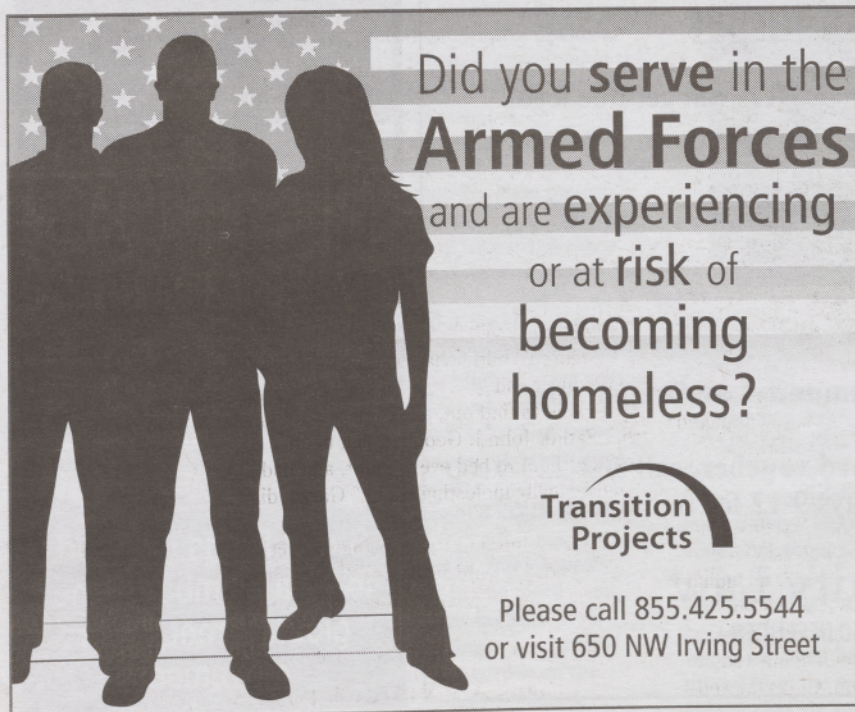
He said he's grateful to the victims for allowing him to help them heal. Without victims coming forward, he said, the "healing and the protection of children could not take place."

People were skeptical when he started working with victims in 1994, Garabedian said, but they certainly aren't anymore.

"The tide has turned," he said.

"Some feel even sadder before they feel better. Others transform themselves into survivors and realize that the sexual abuse was not their fault."

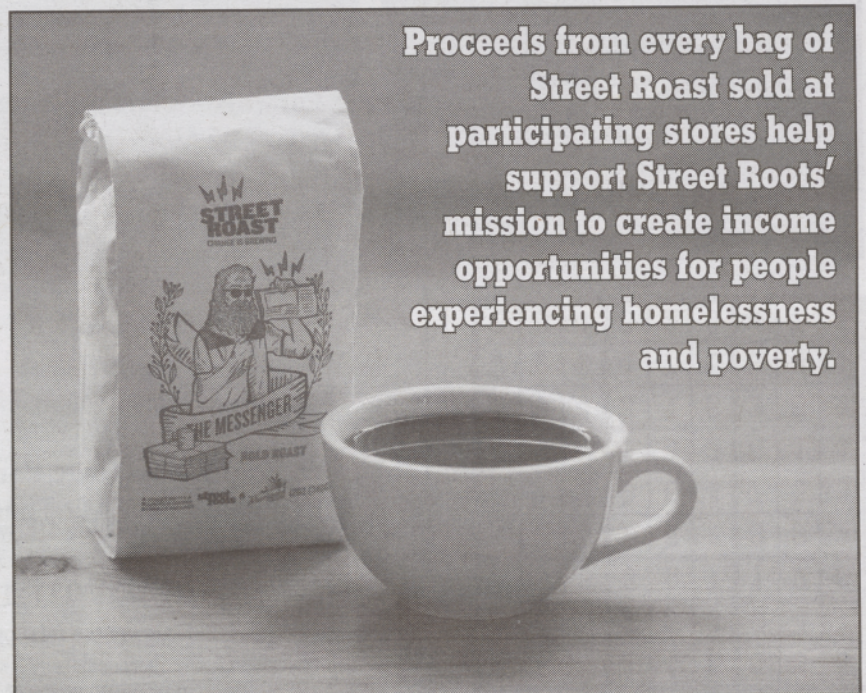
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