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Priest Faces Sex-Abuse Charge

The Rochester Diocese Places the 54-Year-Old on Leave after His Arrest on Friday

By Mike McAndrew
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Rochester police charged a Catholic priest on Friday with sexually abusing a child and the priest was put on administrative leave by the Rochester Diocese.

The Rev.

Dennis Sewar, 54, a priest at St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport, also was charged with a second misdemeanor, endangering the welfare of a child.

Rochester police would provide no additional information Sunday. Television stations in Rochester were reporting Sunday the alleged incident occurred between 1999 and 2001 while Sewar was serving at Church of the Annunciation in Rochester.

Since 1983, Sewar has been a priest in the Rochester Diocese, which includes Cayuga and Seneca counties. He previously served at St. Helen Church in Gates, Church of the Assumption in Fairport, St. James Church in Irondequoit, St. Mary Church in Waterloo.

"I am deeply disturbed by these allegations," said Bishop Matthew Clark.

Sewar was not available for comment, according to a woman who answered the phone Sunday at his residence in the Rochester suburb of Henrietta.

Sewar may not engage in any public ministry while on administrative leave, the diocese said.

The diocese said that after it received information about alleged inappropriate actions by Sewar, it asked local authorities to investigate. Police issued Sewar an appearance ticket.

"We continue to keep the safety and protection of children and vulnerable adults among our highest priorities and remain committed to working with the proper authorities in the prompt investigation of any behavior that is contrary to our policies," Clark said.

Sewar had been due to return from a six-month sabbatical when he was put on leave.