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## **Priest Charged with Abuse**

Recent Pastor of Suburban Rochester Church Was Arrested by Police Friday

By Diana Louise Carter  
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ROCHESTER - A Roman Catholic priest in the Rochester Diocese was charged last week with sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child, the diocese said Sunday.

Rochester police said they arrested the Rev. Dennis Sewar, 54, most recently pastor of a suburban Rochester church, on Friday. The misdemeanor charges were filed in connection with a 1999 incident when Sewar was pastor of Church of the Annunciation in northeast Rochester, police said.

Sewar, a priest since 1983, was not assigned to any diocesan church at the time of his arrest, the diocese said Sunday in a news release. He was on sabbatical from January until June 14, when he was placed on administrative leave, the diocese said.

Diocesan spokesman Michael Tedesco said the diocese learned of the allegations in April and the Rochester Police Department was immediately notified. He said the sabbatical had nothing to do with the allegations.

"I am deeply disturbed by these allegations," Bishop Matthew Clark said in a statement released Sunday. "I sincerely hope that they do not diminish in the eyes of our faithful the great progress made over the last three years."

Clark was making reference to the efforts by the diocese to investigate reports of abuse and offer counseling to any victims of abuse.

The news surprised parishioners at St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport, where Sewar had been pastor until his sabbatical.

"The pastor was well liked here and a nice guy," said St. John's parishioner Rick Stoffel. "He was a great guy, he knew the Lord. ... My prayers are just that everything comes out that is right."

Joe Marchand of Henrietta, who was tutored in English by Sewar in 1979, said, "I'm stunned right now, in disbelief."

A call to Sewar's home in Spencerport went unanswered Sunday. Police did not release any additional information about the 1999 incident relating to the charges.

According to the diocesan statement, Sewar also had served at St. Helen Church in Gates, Church of the Assumption in Fairport, St. James Church in Irondequoit and St. Mary Church in Waterloo.

Another priest in the diocese, the Rev. Michael Volino, an Elmira native, pleaded guilty in May to possession of child pornography on a computer. He will be sentenced Sept. 8 in federal court in Rochester. The diocese and federal authorities said in May that they have not received any allegations of abuse by Volino against children.