

BishopAccountability.org

Priest Pleads Not Guilty to Sexual Abuse of 14-Year-Old Boy

By Jeffrey Blackwell
Rochester Democrat & Chronicle
August 2, 2005

A Spencerport priest was arraigned this morning on charges that he sexually abused a 14-year-old boy while he was a pastor at the Church of the Annunciation in northeast Rochester.

The Rev. Dennis Sear, 54, was arraigned in Rochester City Court this morning on misdemeanor charges of third-degree sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child. He pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Sear declined comment this morning. John Speranza, his attorney, said he will investigate the charges and intends to mount a defense for his client.

"He is strong," Speranza said of Sear. "He denies the charges in that they never happened."

The alleged abuse occurred between October 1999 and August 2001, according to court documents. The alleged victim told police that he and Sear would watch baseball on Sear's big-screen television in his private living quarters at the rectory on Norton Street.

Contact started with Sear holding his hand while they sat on a double reclining chair in Sear's room, according to the victim's deposition. The victim said a few weeks later Sear would put his hand on his pant leg and eventually on his clothed genitals, according to the court document.

The accuser said Sear touched his genital area about 50 times. He said the Sear stopped when he turned 16.

"I was uncomfortable with this but I was afraid to tell him to stop," the alleged victim said in his deposition. "He had become a father figure to me and I did not want to upset him."

Speranza said he does not know why the accuser waited nearly four years to file charges.

Sear, who most recently was pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Spencerport, was on sabbatical when the charges were filed.

He is now on administrative leave, instructed not to engage in any public ministry or live in diocesan housing.