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Priest Charged with Sex Abuse

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WROC [Rochester NY]
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Father Dennis Sear, 54, was arrested and charged Friday with sexual abuse and endangering the welfare of a child.

The alleged sex abuse happened between August 1999 and August 2001 while Father Sear served at the Annunciation Church in Rochester.

Parishoners the church Sear last pastored were shocked by the news, "Very shocked and very stunned, because you just wouldn't think anything like this could happen to this man," said Jean Syracuse.

In a written statement from the Catholic Diocese of Rochester, Bishop Matthew Clark said, "I am deeply disturbed by these allegations...After receiving information related to alleged inappropriate behavior on Rev. Sear's part, the Diocese of Rochester immediately asked local authorities to investigate."

The Catholic Diocese of Rochester said that Rev. Sear was on Sabbatical leave from January to June, and that he was placed on administrative leave June 14th. The statement did not say why he was placed on administrative leave.

Members of St. John the Evangelist Church said Rev. Sear entertained the idea of leaving the Diocese.

"Sometimes he acted like he was unfulfilled. Like the priesthood was wonderful, but that he had so much more he wanted to do," said church member Rosemary Blake.

"It's not surprising to me," said Mark Furnish of the arrest. Furnish claims he was abused by a local priest in the 1980's. He now leads a support group in Albany. "The church has said, that when the scandal broke, that most of the abuse took place in the 70's and 80's only, and we wouldn't be seeing any more of these cases. This particular case proves... that this abuse is very much still happening in the church."

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