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Church Investigation Clears Greene County Priest of Abuse

By Anne Miller
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A priest accused of molesting a child 30 years ago has been cleared by an investigator working for the Albany Roman Catholic Diocese.

The Rev. Jeremiah Nunan of the Sacred Heart Parish in Cairo and Our Lady of Knock Mission in East Durham was granted an administrative leave when the diocese's Independent Mediation Assistance Program began its investigation 11 months ago. Nunan told his congregation that he was temporarily stepping down at a Sunday Mass in February.

On Saturday the diocese released a statement saying there were no "reasonable grounds" for the accusation against Nunan.

"The allegation contained in the complaint was thoroughly investigated but could not be substantiated," the statement read.

But an advocate for people abused by priests questioned the independence of the investigation conducted through a mediation program created by the diocese.

"The only credible investigation would be one conducted by law enforcement of another independent entity," said Mark Lyman, director of the Capital Region chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.

The case against Nunan began when another priest, the Rev. Mark Jaufmann of California, claimed Nunan abused him for about three years, starting in 1967, when Jaufmann was 9. Nunan was serving at St. Mary's Church in Hudson.

In June, Jaufmann told reporters about the abuse.

Lyman said he did not accept the findings, arguing it would have a chilling effect on whether victims file complaints in the future.

"I believe that his clearing of the priest is meant to intimidate other victims from coming forward and to discriminate against Father Mark Jaufmann," Lyman said.

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