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Judge Spares Priest Prison

Troy the Rev. Michael J. Miller Gets Probation after Admitting Soliciting Teen

By Bob Gardinier
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A Catholic priest who admitted Wednesday in Rensselaer County Court that he tried to get a 14-year-old boy to have sex with him two years ago was sentenced to five years probation and ordered to stay away from the boy.

The Rev. Michael J. Miller, 46, pleaded guilty to the felony before Judge Patrick McGrath, saying that on Aug. 21, 2001, he drove up to the boy, who was riding his bicycle at a city parking lot along the Hudson River, and asked the teenager to get into his sport utility vehicle.

"I met a boy and solicited oral sex from him," Miller told McGrath.

Miller was a chaplain at Great Meadow Correctional Facility in Washington County before being placed on administrative leave shortly after his arrest and several months before the Catholic clergy sex scandal erupted nationwide.

His case marked the first time that a priest from the Albany Roman Catholic diocese had been convicted of criminal sexual abuse of a child.

Ordained in 1987, Miller served in several Capital Region parishes until 1993, when he was assigned to St. Peter's Hospital in Albany. In 1999, he was transferred to the maximum-security prison in Comstock.

Diocese spokesman Ken Goldfarb said Miller was removed from ministry by Bishop Howard Hubbard before Wednesday's guilty plea.

"We knew this was coming down," Goldfarb said. He could not provide the date of Miller's removal. "His conduct was wrong, and he was barred from acting as a priest, performing duties or wearing clerical garb."

Miller, who could have faced 1 1/3 to 4 years in prison for third-degree criminal solicitation, signed a waiver of appeal.