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Priest Again Misses Sentencing in Sodomy Case

By Alfonso A. Castillo
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A suspended Catholic priest who has pleaded guilty to charges that he sodomized a 6-year-old boy failed to appear at a scheduled sentencing for the second time in Riverhead yesterday, prompting prosecutors to threaten arrest if he doesn't show again.

The Rev. Barry Ryan, 56, of Palm City, Fla., confessed to abusing the boy in a private home on Long Island while visiting last year. Ryan, who served in parishes in Brooklyn and Queens in the 1970s and '80s, was suspended from priestly duties in 1995, following accusations that he engaged in inappropriate sexual activities while working as an Air Force chaplain in Mobile, Ala.

Ryan pleaded guilty in October to the charge, formally called second-degree course of sexual conduct against a child. Because he is dying from liver cancer, prosecutors and the victim's family agreed on a sentence of only 2 years, possibly to be served outside of prison.

But Ryan failed to attend two scheduled court dates in the past week, at which he was to receive his sentence from County Court Judge Ralph Gazillo. Instead Ryan remained in a Maryland hospice where he is receiving medical treatment.

Ryan's attorney, Joseph Ostrowski of Brooklyn, disputed the characterization that his client "missed" his sentencing, saying the court has been notified in advance each time. "It's a matter of his physical condition," Ostrowski said.

Prosecutor Rosamaria Abbate said Ryan is able to travel, and if he misses his new Dec. 23 court date she intends to request an arrest warrant. Abbate said Ryan "is attempting to use his illness as an excuse."

"The fact that he's currently in the condition he is was taken into account by our victim," Abbate said. "That notwithstanding, it is appropriate to be present at your sentence."

Two of the victim's relatives were present for the scheduled sentencing yesterday.

Ryan lives with severe pain, said Ostrowski, questioning Abbate's presumption that he is well enough to travel. "When she gets her medical degree, we'll ask her about it," he said.

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