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## Accused Priest Is Recalled As a Bright, Effective Preacher

By Dave Condren  
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The Rev. William F. White, the suspended Catholic priest who was accused this week of sexually abusing a young parishioner 20 to 25 years ago, was a quiet, bright seminary student who later became a powerful preacher.

As a seminarian, he was "so quiet that you would not know a thing about him," said a priest who went through the former St. John Vianney Seminary in East Aurora with him.

The priest, who asked not to be identified, also recalled Father White as a bright student who would read a book a day.

Parishioners at St. Louis Church at Main and Edward streets, where Father White was assigned as a weekend assistant for more than five years, knew him as an effective preacher who would end his homilies with a challenge to "think about it."

Monsignor William A. Schwinger, pastor of St. Louis, expressed surprise at the allegations against the 51-year-old South Buffalo resident.

"If they are true, none of that stuff ever touched this parish or this rectory," Monsignor Schwinger said. "He was a good priest here. There was no reason to suspect anything."

Monsignor Schwinger said Father White "loved the church."

"He was loyal to the church. I have no fault to find with his priestly duties," he added.

Monsignor Schwinger described Father White as "friendly and outgoing with a good sense of humor."

"He was well liked here," he said. "I liked him, and the people liked him. He was a fine gentleman."

The Buffalo Diocese acknowledged Tuesday that Father White was suspended as a priest in February 1993 in the wake of "allegations concerning inappropriate behavior."

In a prepared statement, Monsignor Robert J. Cunningham, diocesan chancellor, said the diocese is investigating an additional allegation that was made during the past week.

"We investigated the allegations, and within a matter of days Father White was placed on leave, and his faculties to act as a priest were suspended," Monsignor Cunningham said.

"During the past week," he added, "an added allegation was made, and we are now investigating that allegation."

The diocesan statement was released in the wake of a report Monday on WKBW-TV, in which a man identified only as "Kevin" told the station he was abused about 10 times by Father White after he was sent to the priest's South Buffalo home for disciplining when he was caught clowning around in parochial school.

To Monsignor Thomas F. Maloney, pastor of Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish in Elma, Father White was "a regular guy" who liked sports.

"I would classify him as bright, certainly very intelligent, but he worked very hard" at his studies, said Monsignor Maloney, who attended Holy Family Parochial School in South Buffalo and the seminary with Father White.

Although Monsignor Maloney has seen Father White rarely since their ordinations, he said he was "as surprised as anyone else" about the allegations.

Even though Father White was suspended from performing priestly functions more than a year ago, Monsignor Schwinger said he continued to live at St. Louis rectory until "just before Christmas."

"I think he went to his mother's in South Buffalo," he said.

While living in the rectory, Father White was assigned to the Diocesan Nursing Home Apostolate, saying Masses in area nursing homes until he was suspended.

Father White briefly made headlines in the late 1970s when he was on the board of directors of the Onyx Construction Co. and co-signed for a loan to help the firm get started.

The company was investigated as a phony minority business set up to get contracts under affirmative action requirements. Father White also served as diocesan director of planning and research and as assistant director of the Working Boys Home, which later became known as Buffalo Boys Town.

He has been chaplain of the Erie County Holding Center, Lafayette General Hospital, Amherst Presbyterian Nursing Center and the Episcopal Church Home.

Another priest with the same name, the Rev. William Francis White, who formerly taught at Turner-Carroll High School and served at St. Lawrence Parish, died in 1984.