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8 More Men Accuse Priest of Sexual Abuse

By Paul Vitello
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Msgr. Wallace A. Harris, a prominent Harlem pastor who was suspended from his duties last month after two men accused him of sexually abusing them as children, has since been accused of similar abuse by eight other men, the Manhattan district attorney's office said on Friday.

All 10 accusers have told the authorities that the abuse occurred in the 1970s and '80s, the district attorney's spokeswoman, Alicia Maxey Greene, said in response to a question. She said that the state's five-year statute of limitations on childhood sexual abuse precluded criminal prosecution in any of their cases.

Joseph Zwilling, a spokesman for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, would not say how many new complaints were made against Monsignor Harris since his suspension, but said, "We have gotten other allegations, and we have continued to follow our policy of sharing information with the district attorney."



Msgr. Wallace A. Harris

He said that in all but one case, the accuser had contacted the archdiocese first and given a written statement, which was turned over to prosecutors.

A 12-member diocesan advisory board that is charged with reviewing the evidence in sex abuse cases like Monsignor Harris's and recommending whether a priest should be returned to his duties, has not yet met to consider the accusations against Monsignor Harris, Mr. Zwilling said.

Since Monsignor Harris's removal, Mr. Zwilling said, he has been "staying at a facility" that he would

not describe further. Monsignor Harris has denied all the accusations, Mr. Zwilling said. The monsignor did not respond to messages left on his cellphone on Friday.

Monsignor Harris, 61, was pastor of the Church of St. Charles Borromeo in Harlem for about 20 years. Among his parishioners is Gov. David A. Paterson, who invited him to deliver an invocation at his March 17 inauguration.

During the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to New York in April, the archdiocese gave Monsignor Harris the task of organizing the largest of the pope's events, the Mass at Yankee Stadium.

Eric C. Crumbley, 42, a former New York City police officer who leads a nondenominational storefront congregation called the Harlem Faith Center, is the only one of the 10 accusers who has come forward publicly. He did so last month, after Monsignor Harris was suspended.

On Friday, Mr. Crumbley said that several men, including some of the new accusers, had contacted him after he made his charges to say that they had been abused in the late 1970s and early '80s, when Monsignor Harris was pastor of the Church of St. Joseph of the Holy Family in Harlem or vice rector of the now-defunct Cathedral Preparatory High School and College.

Some parishioners at St. Charles Borromeo, many of whom have sent letters to the diocese supporting Monsignor Harris, said they would continue to back him. "I've known Monsignor Harris for more than 40 years," said Ronald Riddick. "He has baptized my children and buried my father, and there has never been an inkling that this man is capable of doing any of these things.

"I can't help but feel that people are piling on."

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