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## **Diocese, Priest to Pay \$180,000 to End Lawsuit**

By Mike McAndrew  
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The Ogdensburg diocese and the Rev. Liam O'Doherty will pay a total of \$180,000 to four Central New York women to settle lawsuits claiming O'Doherty sexually abused them as children or fraudulently practiced medicine on them.

But a lawyer for O'Doherty said Tuesday that the former parish priest in Sacketts Harbor and Antwerp categorically denies any wrongdoing.

O'Doherty is contributing \$15,000 to Monday's settlement because he thought it impossible to get a fair trial in this environment of clergy sexual abuse scandals, said attorney Peter Carmen.

Two Onondaga County women sued O'Doherty in 2000 and 2001, claiming O'Doherty sexually abused them when they were children between 1985 and 1991 at a Sacketts Harbor church rectory.

Two Oswego County women who sued him charge that O'Doherty fraudulently posed as a licensed physician in the 1990s while serving as parish priest in Antwerp, and that he performed a vaginal examination upon one of them.

Attorney Joseph Amisano of Rochester, who represented the women, said numerous other women have told him O'Doherty sexually abused them.

O'Doherty, 63, served as a priest at seven parishes in Northern New York beginning in 1966. In 1998, the diocese relieved him of his privileges to perform as a priest, but he remains a priest. He resides at Vianney Renewal Center, a retreat for priests in Dittmer, Mo.

The settlement does not bar O'Doherty from again performing priestly duties or include any requirement that the diocese take steps to make him leave the priesthood, Carmen said.

Diocese attorney Paul Hanrahan said no one except the four plaintiffs have complained to diocese officials about O'Doherty's conduct.

O'Doherty's alleged abuses occurred years after unrelated criminal sexual abuse charges against the priest were dismissed.

A Franklin County grand jury accused O'Doherty in February 1979 of having sexual contact with three 14-year-old girls while he was a parish priest in St. Regis Falls. The Ogdensburg diocese permitted O'Doherty to return to parish work after the misdemeanor sexual abuse charges were dismissed.

The four women in the latest lawsuit alleged that the diocese was negligent for not warning them of O'Doherty's propensity to abuse women and children.

One of the Syracuse women alleged O'Doherty sexually abused her in 1991 when she was 10 years old at St. Andrew's Rectory in Sacketts Harbor. The other alleged O'Doherty often fondled her breast between 1985 and 1991, when she was 8 to 13 years old, and once forced her to sleep nude with him in the rectory.

An Oswego County woman alleged that in 1998, when she was 22 and O'Doherty was pastor at St. Michael's Church in Antwerp, he told her he was a licensed physician and persuaded her to let him perform a vaginal exam.

A second Oswego County woman alleged O'Doherty fraudulently posed as a psychiatrist and counseled her.

"He didn't have sexual contact with any of them," said Carmen, O'Doherty's lawyer.

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