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Former Tier Priest Resigns Sex-Abuse Claim behind Move

By Todd McAdam
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APALACHIN -- A former Apalachin pastor has resigned his priesthood following allegations that he sexually abused a teen-ager in the mid-1970s.

The Rev. David P. Simon was one of three active priests to resign at the request of Bishop Matthew H. Clark, leader of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester, which oversees churches in Tioga County.

The allegations stem from incidents more than 20 years ago, before Simon served as pastor of St. Margaret Mary Church in Apalachin from June 1983 to June 1999.

The three priests involved:

- * Simon, pastor of St. Paul Church in Webster, a Rochester suburb.
- * The Rev. Thomas Burr, pastor of St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads.
- * The Rev. Foster Rogers, pastor of St. Pius X Church in Chili.

Also, the Rev. Robert O'Neill, a retired priest, has been told he will not be allowed to continue any form of ministry. And two priests disciplined in the 1990s amid allegations of sexual misconduct, the Rev. William Lum and the Rev. Thomas Corbett, were removed from administrative posts they had been allowed to keep.

"While there has been no indication of repeat behavior on their part over the last 20 years, it simply would not be reasonable or responsible to allow them to continue in their assignments," Clark said. "I offer my deepest apology to anyone harmed by these priests, or any other."

The news that Simon was resigning shocked June Leise of Apalachin, a parishioner at St. Margaret Mary.

"I never would have worried about anything like that," said Leise, who taught religious education in the parish for five years.

Simon was supportive when Leise was being treated for breast cancer, she said.

"That's when his true colors showed," Leise said, citing his frequent calls and the visits from friends he arranged. "He seemed to give my husband the comfort he needed."

Clark's decision followed a review of diocesan files, which cover Simon's assignments, from 1967 at St. Patrick's Church in Victor, to duties at DeSales High School in Geneva, St. Augustine's in Rochester, St. Mary's in Dansville and Holy Name in Rochester, before coming to St. Margaret Mary in 1983.

Had he not resigned, Simon would not have been allowed to continue in any ministry, would not be

allowed to wear clerical clothing, or live in any parish or diocesan dwelling.

The Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, which oversees churches in Broome, Chenango and Cortland counties, announced a policy change earlier this week in which it would ask victims for permission to tell police, but would not act unilaterally.

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