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## Rochester Diocese Forces Three Priests out of Ministry

Associated Press State & Local Wire  
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Three priests suspected of sexually abusing teen-age children more than 20 years ago have been banished from the pulpit in the Roman Catholic diocese of Rochester, Bishop Matthew Clark said Thursday.

The pastors, two serving in suburban Rochester and one near Elmira, resigned at the bishop's request and were placed on indefinite administrative leave. In addition, two other priests disciplined in the 1990s were dismissed from clerical jobs in the western New York diocese.

"Bishop Clark has decided that any priest against whom credible allegations of sexual misconduct are made cannot continue in any form of ministry," the diocese said.

In a review of diocesan files, church officials discovered that allegations of sexual abuse had been made against three priests more than 20 years ago "and all involved inappropriate behavior with teens," the diocese said.

At the time, diocesan leaders relied on "the prevailing contemporary literature and wisdom of the psychiatric community in determining whether the men were able to continue in ministry," it said.

Although no further complaints about the priests have surfaced since then, Clark said "it simply would not be reasonable or responsible to allow them to continue in their assignments."

The priests are the Rev. Thomas Burr, pastor of St. Mary our Mother Church in Horseheads, which lies 8 miles northwest of Elmira; the Rev. Foster Rogers of St. Pius X Church in Chili, a Rochester suburb; and the Rev. David Simon of St. Paul Church in the Rochester suburb of Webster.

Abuse victims had called the diocese with concerns that those priests were still in active ministry. Details of the alleged offenses were not disclosed.

"The focal point of our diocesan policy remains providing healing to victims and ensuring the safety of our community," the bishop said. "I offer my deepest apology to anyone who has been harmed by these priests, or any other."

In April, the religious education director of a Rochester church was dismissed after officials said they discovered evidence that he abused a boy in the late 1980s while at a previous job. And a chaplain resigned from an Elmira hospital after allegations surfaced that he sexually abused a teen-age girl in Ohio in the 1970s.

The 12-county Rochester diocese, which serves 338,000 Catholics, has about 140 active diocesan priests, plus 95 other priests who are retired, disabled or temporarily serving outside the diocese.

The bishop also barred a retired priest, the Rev. Robert O'Neill, from holding any form of church ministry. O'Neill resigned as pastor of St. Christopher Church in North Chili last June, citing health problems, but allegations of inappropriate sexual behavior have since been levied against him, the bishop said.

He also removed the Rev. William Lum and the Rev. Thomas Corbett from administrative jobs at the

diocesan tribunal office. They had been relieved of their ministries and placed on leave in the 1990s after being investigated for sexual misconduct.

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