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## Parish Had No Warning

Earlier abuse complaints against priest kept quiet

By Steve Wick and Shirley E. Perlman  
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In 1999, a complaint was made to the Diocese of Rockville Centre by a former altar boy who said he had been sexually abused by a priest named Andrew Millar about eight years earlier, when the boy was 10 years old.

That complaint prompted the diocese to send Millar for counseling to a treatment center in Maryland. The priest was allowed to retire when he returned in the fall of that year, but he continued to conduct masses at St. Peter and Paul R.C. Church in Manorville without anyone in that parish knowing about the complaint, the treatment, or three other complaints brought against Millar since 1995.

"No one in the parish knew anything," said a diocesan official, who asked not to be identified. The official said Millar assisted at the church by saying Mass there "intermittently," when priests needed personal time.

Eight months after being sent to Manorville, Millar was arrested for sodomizing a learning disabled teenage boy in a Tobay Beach bathroom. He's now serving a 1- to 3-year sentence at the Arthur Kill Correctional Facility in Staten Island.

The new revelations - from a pre-sentencing probation report and sources close to the case involve four complaints made since 1995.

The prior complaints came as a surprise to the father of the child Millar is convicted of sodomizing. "I am shocked to hear this ... All I got was they were investigating the possibility of other incidents."

The fact that priests were able to continue despite sexual abuse complaints brought against them is an ongoing concern in the burgeoning controversy in which the church has been criticized for not referring complaints about priests to police and moving the priests from parish to parish after complaints are made.

The 1999 complaint was made by a 17-year-old boy who said he was sexually abused by Millar for about a year in 1991. At that time, Millar was at Sacred Heart Church in North Merrick. As a result of the complaint, the diocese referred Millar to St. Luke's Institute in Silver Spring, Md., for psychiatric evaluation.

In 1995, when Millar worked briefly at Holy Name of Mary in Valley Stream, the report alleges that a school principal complained that Millar used inappropriate language and fondled children at the school playground, and asked that Millar be barred from school grounds. However, the report does not identify the principal or the school, say whom he complained to, or indicate that the complaint was ever investigated.

The report cites two incidents in 1996.

In one, a couple complained to the diocese that Millar made inappropriate comments during pre-marital counseling. In the other, a teenager complained that Millar followed him into a Jones Beach bathroom and tried to peer at him from under the stall door.

The report does not say whether the diocese was aware of the Jones Beach incident. No further

information was available, and law enforcement officials said none of the complaints made prior to Millar's arrest was ever referred to them.

Rick Hinshaw, a spokesman for the Nassau district attorney's office, said yesterday that his office reviewed the previous complaints after the arrest and decided not to pursue them because the statute of limitations had run out.

"It was concluded that they were all time-barred," Hinshaw said, adding the complaints were presented only as part of the probation report for sentencing.

Joanne Novarro, a diocesan spokeswoman, said Bishop William Murphy, who was installed in September, has pledged that no one with a substantive complaint of sexual abuse against them will be allowed to work in a pastoral setting from here on.

But the revelations also raise questions about the handling of these cases in the past. Novarro declined to comment on that issue. "Father Millar is in prison," she said. "I will speak only about what diocese policy is today and what it will be going forward."

Millar did not answer two letters to his prison cell seeking comment, and the lawyer who represented him at trial says he no longer represents him.

[Newsday File Photo/Dick Yarwood - Andrew Millar leaves court in November 2000 after his sentencing in a sodomy case.]

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