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Priest Who Urged Healing in Sex Scandal Probed

By Jennifer Sinco Kelleher
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A Long Island priest who has been vocal in urging a healing of divisions in the church over the sex abuse scandal is himself being investigated for an allegation that he sexually abused a 10-year-old boy more than a decade ago, officials said Thursday night.

The Suffolk district attorney's office said it received a May 31 letter from the Diocese of Rockville Centre attorney saying there had been an allegation that the Rev. Gerald Twomey abused the the boy "in the period of 1994-95."

At the time, the boy was recuperating at home from a car accident and Twomey was co-pastor of St. Anne's Church in Brentwood, said Bob Clifford, spokesman for Suffolk District Attorney Thomas Spota.

Twomey, 53, is currently pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Church in Manorhaven. Because of the allegation, he was placed on administrative leave earlier this week, which means he's unable to function publicly as a priest, said diocese spokesman Sean Dolan.

Twomey could not be reached for comment Thursday night.

Clifford said that because the statute of limitations has run out, there would likely be no criminal charges against Twomey if the allegation was substantiated.

"But we do investigate the report of the alleged assault to confirm the information that we've been given," he said.

Dolan said the diocese is conducting its own investigation. He wouldn't comment on how the allegation surfaced, only that diocesan officials were notified on May 31, which is when they alerted authorities.

Last year, Twomey was among priests who urged Bishop William Murphy and members of the lay group Voice of the Faithful to meet with a mediator.

"As pastors, we feel that this unresolved conflict drives a wedge between the office of bishop, which plays a central role in Catholic theology, and our people, since most members of Voice of the Faithful are among the most dedicated and active in our parishes," Twomey said at the time.

Dolan said he was aware Twomey had been vocal on the issue.

"I think it's irrelevant whether you support one point of view or another," he said. "We just continue to pray for all those involved in the situation."

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