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Priest on Leave after Allegation

Diocese Takes Action after Mattituck Cleric Is Accused of Sexual Misconduct; Suffolk DA Investigating

By John Moreno Gonzales
Newsday [Long Island NY]
December 19, 2006

<http://www.newsday.com/news/local/longisland/ny-liprie195021621dec19,0,5487828.story?coll=ny-linews-headlines>

Suffolk prosecutors are investigating an allegation of sexual misconduct against a Roman Catholic priest in Mattituck, who has also been placed on administrative leave by the diocese, both the church and district attorney's office confirmed late yesterday.

The "credible allegation" against the Rev. Peter Allen of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church came from a single person and appears to involve one incident, Diocese of Rockville Centre spokesman Sean Dolan said yesterday, declining to provide further details.

Suffolk district attorney's office spokesman Robert Clifford confirmed that Allen was the subject of a sexual misconduct probe involving one alleged victim, but also declined to offer more information.

"In terms of criminal charges being levied, that has not happened," Clifford said. "The case is under investigation."

Dolan said the church learned of the matter Dec. 12, when prosecutors briefed them on the accusation. Allen was placed on administrative leave the next day, Dolan said, and Bishop Emil Wcela stood in for the cleric during subsequent services and told parishioners that Allen had been removed pending an investigation. No announcement was made to the larger public because of the preliminary nature of the case, Dolan said.

"When we learned of the allegation, the diocese took immediate action," Dolan said. "This is an isolated incident that was dealt with at the individual parish itself. I think this is the appropriate level of response."

The investigation of Allen comes less than a month after Roman Catholic priest Thomas G. Saloy, 45, pleaded guilty to a single charge of possession of child pornography in his rectory in Roosevelt.

Peggy O'Neill, a co-chairwoman of the Long Island Voice of the Faithful, a group formed in response to the Roman Catholic sexual abuse scandals of recent years, said the cases illustrated the public needs to be "super vigilant" and report any incidents of sexual misconduct by clerics because they are in a unique position of trust. O'Neill also applauded the diocese for quickly talking to parishioners about Allen.

"It certainly is different from the way they acted in the past," she said. "The response was never that quick and open."