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Accuser Gets Apology from Bishop Former Oswego Man Has Claimed That Monsignor Furfaro Molested Him

By Renee K. Gadoua and Mike McAndrew
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Syracuse diocese Bishop James Moynihan apologized Wednesday to one of three men who alleged this week that Monsignor Francis J. Furfaro molested them as children.

Former Oswego resident Daniel Donahue said the bishop told him he believed him and did not ask a single question about the allegations.

"He said, 'Leave Father Furfaro to me. I will deal with him.' He said, 'I want you to know I am very, very sorry for what you've gone through,'" Donahue said.

Donahue, 55, of Fargo, N.D., is one of five men who in the past month publicly accused Furfaro of molesting them between 1949 and the late 1980s while Furfaro was serving as pastor at St. Joseph Church, Oswego.

"He wanted me to know that he is not after the Catholic Church," Moynihan said. "I apologized for whatever hurt was inflicted and (told him) I will be speaking with Monsignor Furfaro."

The other men who have accused Furfaro are Charles DeCarlo Sr. and Anthony DiCriscio Jr., who also came forward this week, and Jon Mosley and Peter Losurdo III.

Donahue said he was pleased Moynihan called, but said he thinks Furfaro is the person who owes him the apology.

"I don't think I will get an apology from Francis Furfaro," Donahue said. "I want that more than anything else."

The bishop plans to meet with Furfaro after he has talked with all three men who made new allegations, said Danielle Cummings, communications director for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Syracuse. She said two of the three men have contacted the chancery this week. She was not sure whether diocesan officials would try to contact the third man.

"The bishop has clearly stated he wants to hear from the victims," Cummings said.

If the new allegations prove credible, the most severe punishment the bishop could implement would be suspension, which would prohibit the retired priest from performing any sacraments that priests perform - baptism, confession, marriage, anointing of the sick or Holy Communion - and would not allow him to serve in any clerical offices, such as pastor. Under a less severe punishment, the bishop could limit the functions Furfaro can perform.

Furfaro, 84, of Camillus, may be required to undergo treatment, Cummings said. She said retired priests receive a pension from the diocese, but said officials had not discussed whether they would remove Furfaro's pension if further allegations prove credible.

Diocesan officials are also reviewing an allegation that Monsignor Charles Sewall had sexual contact with a 13-year-old boy in 1975.

The alleged victim's lawyer, Frank Policelli, requested that the diocese's lawyer contact him, which has happened, Cummings said.

"Right now, we're waiting to hear further details," she said.

Sewall, who is retired, was principal at Utica Catholic Academy, which later merged with Notre Dame, from 1967 through 1979. Sewall also served as pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Utica.

The diocese last week said it will name by the end of the month a full-time victim advocate and appoint a lay advisory board to advise the bishop after an allegation of sexual abuse is made.

Cummings said about 15 people have volunteered for the board, and a few people have requested information about the full-time paid position. Officials will meet next week to discuss the selection process and the board's format, she said.

The bishop is also planning listening sessions to allow local Catholics to discuss concerns about the diocese's policy and its response to the sexual-abuse scandal. Cummings said the locations and dates of those meetings have not been set, but they will take place before Moynihan attends the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops meeting in Dallas, June 13 to 15.

The more than 300 U.S. bishops are expected to discuss a national policy for handling allegations of sexual abuse.

"Part of the national response would include the input of the laity," Cummings said. "He wants to be prepared to share what's on the minds of people in his diocese."

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