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Jury Determines Church, Priest Did Not Hide Facts

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Utica, NY - A civil jury has decided the Catholic Diocese of Syracuse and one of its priests did not try to conceal or misrepresent information about how a 12-year-old altar boy drowned during a church picnic 37 years ago.

The jury decision Thursday means the family of drowning victim Albert Piacentino cannot go forward with a \$150 million negligence suit against the diocese and the Rev. James Quinn because of the statute of limitations.

If the jury had found there was concealment, then the statute could have been set aside.

The family's attorney, Frank Policelli, acknowledged "this is the end of the line."

Last year, Anna Marie Piacentino, the victim's mother, filed the \$150 million lawsuit after information was discovered in 2003 indicating Quinn may not have properly supervised the children at the 1968 picnic.

Piacentino drowned while swimming with other children during a church outing for altar boys at Camp Nazareth in the Adirondacks.

After Piacentino drowned, the diocese issued a statement that Quinn was present at the camp at the time of the drowning and that he had organized a search for the missing boy before police arrived, according to Policelli.

Another boy at the camp, however, said Quinn was at the church's rectory in Utica when Piacentino was missing.

"It certainly wasn't a vindication of Father Quinn on the merits of the case," Policelli said of the jury's decision.

Quinn had no comment.

"This puts the matter to rest finally and absolutely," said Emil Rossi, Quinn's attorney.

Diocese spokeswoman Danielle Cummings said the diocese was pleased with the verdict, but offered prayers to the Piacentino family.

Quinn remains a priest in good standing and resides at St. Peter Church in Syracuse, she said.

Quinn also has been accused in a previously dismissed lawsuit of sexually abusing John Zumpano in the 1960s, beginning when Zumpano was an eighth-grade student at St. Agnes Church in Utica. The state Court of Appeals is expected to decide at a later date if it will hear Zumpano's sex abuse case.