

# Alleged victims settle with Fall River diocese

FALL RIVER, Mass. (CNS) — The Diocese of Fall River has reached a financial settlement with 68 people who said they were sexually abused three decades ago by former priest James R. Porter.

Fall River Bishop Sean P. O'Malley said in a Dec. 3 statement that he hoped the agreement would bring "comfort and healing to those individuals whose childhood was shadowed by the acts of a priest of the church."

The former priest's alleged victims said through their attorney that they saw the settlement as an acknowledgment by the church that its leaders mishandled Porter during the 1960s.

Calling this a "tragic time for our church," Bishop O'Malley said his diocese had "committed itself to an open and fair policy in cases of reported sexual abuse and is establishing a written policy in these matters."

As part of the settlement both parties agreed to keep financial details private, a spokesman for the Fall River Diocese told Catholic News Service Dec. 4.

In announcing the settlement Dec. 3, the group of alleged victims said they viewed the case as a turning point in the

Catholic Church's attitude about sexual abuse by clergy.

The victims opened negotiations in August with the Diocese of Fall River and its insurer, Continental Insurance Co., but the insurer pulled out. The company has said it had no liability because the diocese had violated the terms of the policy by failing to supervise Porter.

Porter, 57, also is accused of having molested children in Minnesota, where he currently resides, and in New Mexico, where he was sent for treatment while a priest. In all, more than 80 men and women claim they were molested as children by the former priest.

In late November, jury selection began in Minneapolis in the first trial of criminal charges against the Boston native.

Porter, who was a priest of the Fall River diocese, left the priesthood in the early 1970s. He now has a wife and four children in Minnesota, where he is accused of molesting his children's 15-year-old baby sitter.

He still faces criminal charges in Massachusetts for 46 counts of sexual assault.



AP/Wide World Photos

**SETTLEMENT REACHED** — Former Fall River priest James R. Porter leaves the Washington County Courthouse Sept. 24 after being charged with molesting his children's babysitter.

# Somalia

Continued from prior page

The Catholic apostolic administrator of Somalia was among those who recently acknowledged that he would not oppose use of international military action to restore order there.

"If that turns out to be the only realistic option, I would not exclude it," said Franciscan Father Giorgio Bertin, de facto leader of the tiny Catholic community in Somalia since the July, 1989, assassination of Bishop Pietro Salvatore Colombo of Mogadishu.

The Mogadishu Diocese is the see of the Somali church.

Father Bertin added that humanitarian projects would not work without a political solution to the anarchy.

Lack of security prevents CRS from getting food to as many people as it otherwise could and makes the cost of food delivery exorbitant, said Pezzullo.

CRS, he said, has been "flying in the food. It costs \$800 a ton to fly it in. It would cost \$50 a ton if we could ship it in," he said. He added that air delivery limits how much food can be brought in at a time.

Because of rampant pillaging, "food can't be warehoused too long because warehouses become a focal center for attack," he said.

In New York, an interreligious coalition issued a resolution calling for U.S. action to stop violence in Somalia and the former Yugoslavia, and to ensure that aid reaches those suffering in both regions.

In the resolution, coalition members — including the U.S. bishops' conference — also said the United States should work with other nations to the extent possible, but "alone where necessary."

"America is not policeman to the world, but the mass murder of innocents is unacceptable," the joint resolution said.

Contributing to this story was Kevin Kelly in Kansas City, Mo.; John Thavis in Rome; and Tracy Early in New York.

# Court rejects challenge to Mississippi abortion law

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court Dec. 7 left intact a ruling upholding Mississippi's law requiring women to wait a day before having an abortion.

The court also let stand the state's informed consent requirement, under which physicians must tell women about the risks of and alternatives to abortion. Without comment, the justices let stand a 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling allowing the law to take effect.

The challenge was based on a com-

plaint that the law's opponents should have been entitled to a hearing before it took effect. Operators of the state's three abortion clinics sought to prove that the waiting period would pose an undue burden because poor women would have to travel far from home and stay overnight to meet its requirements.

The appeals court rejected the clinics' challenge on the basis of the Supreme Court's June ruling upholding most of Pennsylvania's Abortion Control Law.

"The differences between the Mississippi and Pennsylvania acts are not suf-

ficient to render the former unconstitutional on its face," the court said.

The Mississippi law requires doctors to wait for 24 hours to perform an abortion, with only a narrow exception for medical emergencies.

It also requires doctors to tell pregnant women of the medical risks of abortion; the probable age of the fetus; that the father is legally liable to help support the child; that medical assistance benefits may be available for childbirth and neonatal care; and about alternatives to abortion.

## The St. Ann's family is sharing something very special...



Each other.

St. Ann's Home, The Heritage, and Home Connection provide opportunities for caring and compassion. Residents, Participants, Family Members and Staff are grateful members of a community giving one another reasons to smile.



If you would like more information about joining our community or would like to schedule an appointment and tour, please call 342-1700.

St. Ann's Home, The Heritage and Home Connection  
1500 Portland Avenue, Rochester, NY 14621  
716-342-1700