

DIOCESAN NEWS

Diocesan priest, 60, faces sexual abuse charge

By Kathleen Schwar
Staff writer

A state police investigation continues into the conduct of Father Eugene G. Emo, 60, charged Feb. 16 with second-degree sexual abuse. He pleaded not guilty that afternoon in Steuben County Court in Bath and was released after posting \$1,000 bail.

Father Emo is accused of having sexual contact with a 35-year-old male who is mentally handicapped and incapable of consenting.

Trooper Gene Chisholm, public information officer for the New York State Police, said the charges relate to incidents that occurred "off and on" over the past two years, and that the investigation has been going on since early 1996.

The misdemeanor charge carries a penalty of up to a year in jail. No future court date had been set as of *Catholic Courier* deadline.

On Jan. 31, Bishop Matthew H. Clark had placed Father Emo on administrative leave, which means he may not function as a priest.

"Following diocesan policy on charges of sexual misconduct, the bishop's action was taken immediately after being notified of an alleged incident at Rev. Emo's home in Steuben County," a diocesan press release stated.

According to Chisholm, the alleged incidents occurred at the priest's home on Emo Road, Cohocton.

"We will fight these criminal charges and try to show there are many mitigating circumstances that make him not guilty of any crime," Felix Lapine, Father Emo's attorney, said in a telephone interview Monday. He declined to elaborate.

Father Emo had been living at Holy Trinity Church, Webster, where he was not assigned but assisted with liturgies and sacramental celebrations.

On Sept. 22, 1993, Father Emo had re-

signed as pastor of St. Januarius Church/Our Lady of the Grape Shrine, Naples, after six years there.

His resignation followed a diocesan investigation into allegations that individuals other than Father Emo had mishandled parish money, and that the priest had responded inadequately to reports of financial impropriety. Although Father Emo also was alleged to have behaved inappropriately, the diocese found no evidence of sexual misconduct.

Father Emo was placed on administrative leave August 1993-June 1994, while he was at an out-of-state residential treatment facility, according to Liz Brown, diocesan communications director. "Limited assignments" followed.

Trooper Chisholm said he didn't know of any criminal investigation of Father Emo prior to the current one in Steuben and Ontario counties.

Friday's arrest of Father Emo at Church of the Blessed Sacrament,

Rochester, was made after an acquaintance of the victim talked to police. Father Emo had been moved to Blessed Sacrament when the diocese placed him on administrative leave.

Police searched Father Emo's Cohocton home and Holy Trinity rectory Friday, finding evidence at both locations, Chisholm said. He refused to elaborate.

Police are encouraging individuals who may have been involved in similar incidents with the priest to come forward. Calls already were coming in Friday, Chisholm added.

"We are going to look at every parish in every community he has been at, most importantly, over the past five years," Chisholm said. The statute of limitations in New York state is five years for a felony. But he said information going back more than five years may help determine if the priest was "carrying on a course of conduct over a period of years."

Father Emo has served at eight parishes since his ordination in 1961: St. Patrick's, Owego; St. Cecelia's, Rochester; St. Mary's, Dansville; St. Margaret Mary, Apalachin; St. Michael's, Newark; St. Mary's, Geneseo; Holy Rosary, Rochester; and St. Januarius. Recently he was chaplain for the VA hospital in Canandaigua, and earlier, Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center, Auburn.

The diocese asks anyone with a concern about sexual abuse to contact Father Robert Ring or Barbara Pedeville at the Pastoral Center, 716/328-3210.

"Our major concern is care of the victim and families," Pedeville said, noting that diocesan policy is to offer psychological and pastoral care. In fact, she said she had tried to contact the Steuben County victim, but he had been moved from his group home.

"We are always saddened when any incidences like this take place," Pedeville said. "It's always difficult, especially in light of the many good priests we have out there whose lives and reputations are damaged by something like this."

Hospital, MCC ax Bull's Head development

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — The organizers of a proposed \$22 million health care and education development project in the Bull's Head neighborhood have decided to end the project, according to a Feb. 15 statement by St. Mary's Hospital.

In part, St. Mary's and Monroe Community College, two of the project's key partners, blamed projected cuts in state capital funding, and also in Medicare and Medicaid funding.

Adam Anolik, St. Mary's chief financial officer, noted, for example, that the state's projected Medicaid cuts mean a loss of \$3 million in revenue for the hospital this year. He added that projected federal cuts in Medicare funding, and other health-related programs, are also expected to hit the hospital hard.

"The anticipation is that they're going to be very significant to us," he said of the funding cuts.

St. Mary's initiated the Bull's Head project in 1987, calling for the development of a four-acre tract of land located on West Main Street across from the hospital. Approved by Rochester City Council in 1992, the project included plans for a satellite health care training facility operated by Monroe Community College; medical and administrative office space for St. Mary's; a police substation; and retail space.

Funding for the project would have come from the institutions involved, the city, Monroe County, and New York state.



File photo

The proposed project to develop the Bull's Head neighborhood across from St. Mary's Hospital (pictured here) has been terminated by the organizers.

Last fall, however, the state informed Monroe Community College that it would be unable to fund its portion of the project, according to Cynthia L. Cooper, the college's director of public affairs.

New York state generally splits the cost of any of the college's capital projects with Monroe County, she said, and MCC didn't want to go to the county for funding once the state pulled out.

Organizers had hoped the project would revitalize the Bull's Head neighborhood, long known for its boarded-up storefronts and blighted look.

Sandra Stephens, St. Mary's community development coordinator, served as

president and chief operating officer of the Bull's Head Community Development Corporation. She expressed disappointment over the project's demise.

"A lot of people had hoped that the project would be the basis for doing a lot of other projects in the neighborhood," she commented.

However, some people from the Bull's Head area greeted news of the project's death with an opposite reaction.

Steve Rozaklis, owner of Critic's Restaurant, 906 W. Main St., opposed the project because it would have moved his business out of the area. He summed up his feelings upon hearing about the project's axing with one word: "Relief."

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