

Ex-altar server files abuse suit

Mike Monaco/Catholic Courier

A former parishioner of St. Patrick's, Owego, is suing the parish — as well as the Diocese of Rochester, Bishop Matthew H. Clark and the Holy See — for \$50 million on allegations of sexual abuse by Albert H. Cason, a former diocesan priest who was removed from ministry in 1985.

The suit was filed Nov. 26 in the Northern District of U.S. District Court in Binghamton by James Insko, 37, a resident of California. Ronald R. Benjamin of Binghamton is Insko's attorney.

The lawsuit alleges that Cason committed "sexual molestation and abuse" against Insko while he was an altar server at St. Patrick's in the late 1970s. The suit charges that Cason and Insko engaged in sexual acts over a period of several years, and that at one point Insko tended off a rape attempt by Cason. According to the suit, Insko had no further contact with Cason after discovering a videotape showing Cason engaged in sexual acts with other male altar servers.

The suit charges that the defendants were "grossly negligent in the placement, supervision, and retention of Cason, and aided and abetted in the concealment of criminal sexual misconduct."

Michael Tedesco, diocesan director of communications, said Dec. 3 that the diocese would not comment on the lawsuit because it had not yet been served legal documents.

Benjamin told the *Catholic Courier* that he plans to file lawsuits on behalf of other clients in upcoming weeks. All will name the same defendants and will involve allegations of sexual abuse by Cason, Benjamin said.

According to Tedesco, Cason was ordained in 1962. Tedesco said Cason was an assisting priest at Church of the Good Shepherd, Henrietta (1962-63); Sacred Heart, Auburn (1963-68); St. John the Evangelist, Spangorport (1968-73); and Corpus Christi, Rochester (1973). Tedesco said Cason served as co-pastor of St. Patrick, Owego, from 1973 until diocesan officials removed him from ministry in 1985. Tedesco did not comment on the reason for Cason's removal.

Boston not filing bankruptcy

Jerry Filteau/CNS

WASHINGTON — The Catholic clergy sexual-abuse saga continued in late November with new arrests, new lawsuits, new court decisions and settlement of more than 60 lawsuits.

Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston Nov. 26 met for more than two hours with leaders of Voice of the Faithful, a now-international lay Catholic organization formed in Boston when the clergy sex-abuse scandal broke there last January. Spokesmen for the group said the cardinal agreed with two of their stated goals, support for abuse victims and support for priests of integrity, but questioned their third goal of "shaping structural change" in the church.

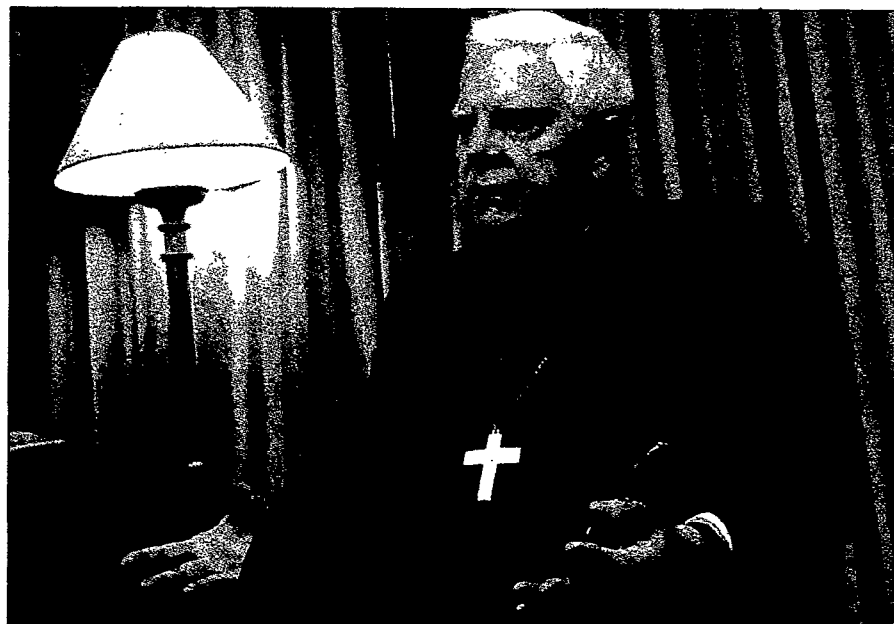
The day before, Superior Court Judge Constance Sweeney ordered the Boston Archdiocese to hand over about 11,000 internal documents dealing with 65 priests who have been accused of abusing children sometime over the past three decades.

The archdiocese, facing some 400 sexual-abuse lawsuits, was engaged simultaneously in settlement talks with their attorneys and in negotiations with archdiocesan insurance carriers.

Archdiocesan spokeswoman Donna M. Morrissey termed "speculative and premature" a report in *The Boston Globe* Dec. 1 saying the archdiocese was making preparations to file for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

"Currently we are in mediation and we are going to continue in mediation," she said.

In nearby New Hampshire, the Diocese of Manchester Nov. 26 reached a \$5.1 million settlement with 62 alleged sexual-abuse victims



Nancy Wiechec/CNS

Cardinal Bernard F. Law of Boston talks about the clergy sexual-abuse crisis Nov. 13. His spokesperson has called a report that the archdiocese will file for bankruptcy protection "speculative and premature."

represented by Manchester attorney Peter Hutchins. The diocese said the abuse claims involved 28 priests, two lay workers and a member of a religious order and involved alleged incidents from the 1950s to the 1980s.

A lawsuit was filed Nov. 22 against Sacred Heart Brother Leo Labbe, principal of Bishop Guertin High School in Nashua, N.H., by a Virginia man who claims Brother Labbe sexually abused him more than 40 years ago at a school in Massachusetts. Brother Labbe denied the allegations but placed himself on administrative leave while the claim is investigated.

In October the Manchester Diocese reached a \$950,000 settlement with 16 alleged sexual-abuse victims represented by attorney Charles Douglas III.

Hutchins said he represents four

clients with lawsuits still pending against the diocese. In addition, lawsuits by 60 claimants represented by attorney Mark Abramson remained unsettled.

In Los Angeles authorities said Nov. 25 two former priests have been charged with sexually assaulting minors.

Former Carmelite priest Matthew M. Sprouffs, 75, was arrested Nov. 25 at the Carmelite retirement home in Illinois where he had lived since his removal from the priesthood last spring. He was charged with molesting a female relative, a minor, in the 1950s when he was assigned to Mount Carmel High School in Los Angeles.

Former priest John A. Salazar-Jimenez, 47, who is believed to be living in Canada, was charged with sexually assaulting two boys when he was working as a Piarist priest in Los Angeles in the early 1980s. Convicted of other child molestation crimes in California in 1988, Salazar spent three years in prison, then joined the Diocese of Amarillo, Texas, where he worked until he left the priesthood last May.

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