

Fr. Markey incident leads to lawsuit against diocese

by Dan Rossini, director
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New Ulm – The actions of a priest from Ireland who worked for several months at St. Andrew's Parish in Granite Falls almost 30 years ago have embroiled the Diocese of New Ulm in a lawsuit alleging sexual abuse of a minor.

Fr. Francis Markey, a priest of the Diocese of Clogher, Ireland, served at St. Andrew's in the spring of 1982 during and after participating in a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) program at Willmar State Hospital. During that time, he allegedly had inappropriate sexual contact with a boy he was helping to prepare for first Holy Communion.

The lawsuit, filed Jan. 10 in U.S. District Court in St. Paul, Minn., names Fr. Markey, the Diocese of Clogher, and the Diocese of New Ulm as defendants, along with two rehabilitation facilities where Fr. Markey received treatment and the religious orders that operated them.

The suit alleges that while at St. Andrew's, "Fr. Markey engaged in unpermitted, harmful and offensive sexual contact" with the unnamed plaintiff, who was approximately eight years old at the time and in second grade.

The suit further alleges that the defendants knew that Fr. Markey had sexually abused children and had received treatment as a perpetrator of sexual abuse prior to the incident, and "defrauded children and their

parents and/or entered into a conspiracy to defraud children and their parents" by failing to disclose the priest's history to them.

However, when allegations first surfaced last year concerning Fr. Markey's time at St. Andrew's, the diocese reported to the press that it had no knowledge of Fr. Markey's history of sexual abuse when he was accepted into the state-sponsored CPE program.

According to the complaint, Fr. Markey was first suspended for sexually abusing a child and sent for treatment in 1964. Subsequently, he was returned to priestly ministry. During the 1970s he reoffended, received treatment, and was reinstated to active ministry at least two more times.

As of Jan. 27, the diocese had not yet been formally served with a summons and a copy of the complaint. Once this occurs, it has 21 days to respond.

Representing the plaintiff is attorney Patrick Noaker of the law firm of Jeff Anderson & Associates in St. Paul. Anderson and his firm specialize in sexual abuse cases, and have filed over 1,500 lawsuits against the Catholic Church over the last 30 years alleging sexual misconduct by priests.

On Jan. 10 Anderson announced plans to join forces with Ann Olivarius, an American-born U.K. solicitor, to open a law office in London dedicated to rooting out clerical

sexual abuse in Europe. The new firm's first case will be Fr. Markey's.

Allegations against Fr. Markey associated with his short stint in the diocese surfaced last March in a CNN report, which accused Fr. Markey of sexual misconduct involving a young male parishioner at St. Andrew's in 1982.

The diocese was cited in the report as saying that Fr. Markey was dismissed from St. Andrew's and sent for treatment because parents were concerned that he had an "unnatural attraction to minor males."

Msgr. Douglas Grams, the diocese's vicar general and the bishop's delegate in matters pertaining to sexual misconduct, told CNN at the time that the diocese did not have knowledge of Fr. Markey's history when he was accepted into the CPE program.

Following the CNN report, the Diocese of New Ulm issued a press release concerning Fr. Markey dated March 25. It said that in the spring of 1982, "Fr. Markey filled in at the Church of St. Andrew in Granite Falls following the death of the church's pastor, and before the new pastor began his assignment there. Fr. Markey left the Diocese of New Ulm in June of 1982. Since that time, Markey has not lived in or served the diocese in any capacity."

The press release went on to reiterate the diocese's commitment to offer help and healing to victims of sexual misconduct, and to encourage anyone

who believes that he or she may have suffered sexual abuse by a priest, deacon or pastoral administrator to report the misconduct to diocesan authorities.

In a letter written on March 27, Fr. Jim Devorak, pastor of St. Andrews, assured his parishioners that his parish, the diocese and the Catholic Church throughout the world were working vigilantly to address wrongs committed in the past and to prevent any future injustices. He offered his own help, that of the diocese, and the assistance of Catholic Charities to anyone who thought they might be a victim of clerical sexual abuse.

Fr. Markey was extradited from Indiana to Ireland last year to face charges that he raped a boy in that country over 40 years ago. He cannot be extradited again to this country to face charges in a civil suit. Anderson, however, believes his new firm will be helpful in gathering testimony from Fr. Markey as the case progresses.