

Fourth lawsuit filed against diocese as result of Child Victims Act

By *The Prairie Catholic* staff

NEW ULM – A lawsuit has been filed against the Diocese of New Ulm concerning Fr. William Marks, a deceased priest of the diocese.

The lawsuit, filed Nov. 18, 2013, in the Second Judicial District Court for the State of Minnesota, alleges that Fr. Marks sexually abused a male minor while serving as pastor at St. John's Parish in Hector in the late 1950s. The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis was also named in the lawsuit.

Fr. Marks was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of St. Paul in June of 1936. He became a priest of the Diocese of New Ulm when it was established in 1957, going on to serve as pastor at two parishes until his death in November 1979.

This lawsuit is the fourth that has been filed against the diocese since the passage of the Child Victims Act by the Minnesota legislature last May. The act removes the statute of limitations by allowing alleged past victims to bring forward any case, no matter how old it is, for a three-year period. Under previous Minnesota law, sexual abuse victims 18 years old and under had until they were 24 to file a lawsuit.

In a statement released Nov. 18, the diocese said it would be investigating the claims in the new lawsuit but had no facts to report about them at the time. It also expressed its regret for the "long-lasting and devastating effects of sexual misconduct on the part of clergy" and encouraged those who had suffered from sexual abuse by a priest, deacon, pastor, or pastoral administrator to contact the diocese's victim assistance coordinator or the bishop's delegate in matters pertaining to sexual misconduct.

In a letter sent to parishioners Nov. 19, Bishop John M. LeVoir expressed his commitment "to offering hope, healing, and reconciliation" for those affected by sexual misconduct on the part of clergy, and asked all to join him in prayer.