

Orange priest accused of sexually abusing minor

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MONTGOMERY – The Rev. Daniel O’Hare, pastor of the Holy Name of Mary-Assumption parish that serves Montgomery and Maybrook, has been accused of sexually abusing a minor.

The Archdiocese of New York said the abuse is alleged to have occurred sometime during the 1990s. The archdiocese learned of the allegation from the Orange County District Attorney’s office last week.

O’Hare, who has been a priest for more than 50 years, has denied the accusation but has agreed to step aside and not perform any public ministerial duties while the archdiocese conducts an independent investigation.

O’Hare did not offer Masses at either of the parish churches this past weekend. Substitute priests were employed.

Cardinal Timothy Dolan sent a letter to all parishioners, dated Friday, explaining the situation. In the letter, a copy of which the archdiocese provided to the Times Herald-Record, Dolan said he wanted parishioners to hear the “unpleasant news” first from him and not the news media.

Dolan said the archdiocese will follow its established protocols for such situations.

Independent outside investigators, who the cardinal described as “former federal agents,” will look into the allegation.

All the information they gather will then be presented to the archdiocese's Lay Review Board, which the cardinal said also is independent. The board will assess all the information, along with any statements O'Hare or the person who made the allegation wish to present to them.

The board then will tell Dolan whether they have found the allegation to be credible and substantiated. Dolan would make any final decision on O'Hare.

If the allegation is found to not be credible, Dolan wrote, "Father O'Hare could return to the parish."

This is the latest of several recent actions involving accusations of sexual abuse against local priests.

In December, the archdiocese suspended the Rev. Donald Timone, a retired priest living at the Church of St. Joseph in Middletown, while it re-investigates a 15-year-old allegation of sexual abuse against him.

Earlier this year, the Rev. John J. Lynch, 79, a Newburgh native, was permanently removed from ministry at the Immaculate Conception Church in Woodbourne after the Lay Review Board found that decades-old abuse allegations against him were credible.

O'Hare was ordained by one of Dolan's predecessors, the late Cardinal Francis Spellman, on May 29, 1965.

He has spent much of his time as a priest in the mid-Hudson, including stints at St. Peter's Church in Poughkeepsie, St. Joseph's in New Paltz, Sacred Heart in Port Jervis and St. Patrick's in Newburgh, before becoming pastor of the Church of the Assumption in Maybrook in 1996.

When that parish was merged with the Holy Name of Mary Church in Montgomery as part of the restructuring process the archdiocese called "Making All Things New" several years ago, he became pastor of the combined parish.

O'Hare, who was named dean of Orange County in 2014, also became known over the years for his work with groups fighting substance abuse.

Dolan asked any parishioners who have information about this case or similar allegations to contact the district attorney's office, or the archdiocese's victims' assistance coordinator and Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program, which were set up in 2016 to address the ongoing priest sexual abuse crisis.

He concluded his letter to parishioners by asking them to pray for both O'Hare and his accuser.

"Know that you and your fellow parishioners will have a special remembrance in (my prayers)," Dolan wrote.

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