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Lawyers, church don't know effect of Holley plea on suit

By George B. Griffin
Staff Reporter

WORCESTER — Lawyers and church officials are uncertain how David A. Holley's guilty plea to child rape charges in New Mexico Tuesday will affect a civil suit here.

Holley, a former Roman Catholic priest of the Worcester diocese, pleaded guilty to molesting eight boys during the 1970s while he was in New Mexico for psychiatric treatment.

Holley served at parishes in the Worcester diocese from 1958 to 1969. In 1972, the Worcester diocese sent Holley to Jemez Springs, N.M., for treatment for pedophilia at a center run by the Servants of the Paraclete, a religious order.

While there, Holley served as a priest in New Mexico parishes, where the offenses he admitted to committing occurred.

In December, Bruce E.

Pasternack, a New Mexico lawyer, filed a lawsuit against the Worcester diocese on behalf of two of Holley's alleged victims, saying that the diocese had an "affirmative duty" to warn the people of New Mexico of Holley's sexual problems.

Pasternack yesterday said he did not know what effect the guilty plea would have on the civil lawsuit against the Worcester diocese.

Monsignor Edmund T. Tinsley, vicar general of the Worcester diocese, said, "All that we would know is what we read in this morning's Telegram."

He noted the criminal and civil cases involving Holley were different, but could not say whether one would have an effect on the other.

James Reardon, lawyer for the diocese, declined comment "because it's pending in court."

Holley served locally at St.

Philip's Church in Grafton, St. Denis Church, East Douglas, St. Mary of the Hills Church, Boylston, and Our Lady of Fatima Church, Worcester.

In the days following the filing of the lawsuit in New Mexico, some area men said they also had been sexually assaulted by Holley when they were boys in the 1960s in the Worcester area.

Boston lawyer Roderick J. MacLeish, whose law firm represents four people who have brought sexual assault allegations against Holley, said Holley's guilty plea did not involve any of his clients.

Some of those people also have complained to District Attorney John J. Conte, alleging that Holley sexually assaulted them when they were children.

Conte has an "active investigation" into those complaints, a spokeswoman for the district attorney said.