

# Priest pleads guilty to sex charges involving 2 boys he had counseled

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A Roman Catholic priest pleaded guilty in Jefferson Circuit Court yesterday to sex charges involving two boys he had counseled at a local church.

The Rev. Daniel C. Clark, 40, pleaded guilty to one count each of second-degree sodomy and first-degree sexual abuse. The abuse charge was initially sodomy, but it was reduced as part of a plea agreement with Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Kelly Miller.

Another sodomy charge was dismissed because the alleged crime occurred outside local jurisdiction, at Lake Patoka in Indiana. Miller said she will notify law-enforcement authorities there about Clark's guilty

plea. Miller recommended a 15-year prison term, and Judge Ken Corey scheduled a sentencing hearing for Nov. 4.

According to court records, Clark fondled an 11-year-old boy in late 1981 or early 1982 and performed oral sodomy on a 12-year-old boy between February and August 1982. At the time, Clark was assigned to St. Rita Catholic Church, 8709 Preston Highway.

Clark, who was ordained in 1980, had been counseling the boys. After his arrest June 23, the Louisville Catholic archdiocese placed him on administrative leave, meaning he could not work publicly as a priest.

In court yesterday, Clark told Corey that he spent a month in a mental hospital in 1983 because of depression and has been receiving

psychiatric counseling ever since.

In a telephone conversation between Clark and one of the victims on June 14 that was taped by police and made part of the court file, the priest said he was abused as a child and said he was "very sick inside."

The boy told Clark that he felt uncomfortable when he saw priests. Clark said he was sorry and told the boy not to feel guilty about his part in the sex acts.

"It was all my fault," the priest said. "I was sick... I was very mentally ill, which is obvious, and no one in their right mind would do something like that... It was one of those situations where you just don't realize how sick you are."

"I wish the hell there was something I could do to change history."