

News Release: For immediate release

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Minnesota Nun Molested Boy, Attorneys File Suit

PRESS CONFERENCE: 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 29, 2015

Where: Minneapolis attorney Patrick Noaker's office, 333 Washington Ave. N., Suite 300

First case filed under new law against nuns.

Victim to speak with reporters

(MINNEAPOLIS, April 29, 2015) – Attorneys filed a new civil lawsuit against an order of nuns, and the Diocese of New Ulm, alleging sexual abuse of a 10-year-old boy repeatedly molested by a nun at a Catholic school in Madison, Minnesota.

This is the first civil lawsuit filed against an order of nuns under Minnesota's new law for sex-abuse victims.

The lawsuit, filed on behalf of a 58-year-old man from Shakopee, Minnesota, alleges that a nun repeatedly abused the boy in his fifth-grade year, from the fall of 1967 through spring 1968, at St. Michael's Catholic School in Madison, Minnesota.

Court papers say Sister Mary Regina repeatedly fondled the boy's genitals during school hours.

Court papers identify the boy as John Doe 117. Since filing the lawsuit, the victim has decided to reveal his identity, to encourage other victims of sexual abuse to come forward.

The man referenced in the lawsuit, Douglas Devorak of Shakopee, Minnesota, will speak with reporters at a press conference at 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 29th at Minneapolis attorney Patrick Noaker's office: 333 Washington Avenue N., Suite 300.

"I do not need to be anonymous anymore," Devorak said. "I am a survivor. I did not do anything wrong."

"I need to get the truth out and tell my story to heal."

Devorak's attorneys are now investigating additional claims of sexual abuse by nuns at St. Michael's Catholic School. Noaker's team is also investigating claims of child sexual abuse involving at least one other order of nuns.

"It is shocking and sad that nuns who should have protected children molested them," Noaker said.

"It wasn't just the priests, who sexually abused kids," said Lee James, attorney and one of the country's leading experts on Catholic clergy sexual abuse of children. Lee James and Craig Vernon represent more than 110 victims with claims against nuns in other states.

"It's harder for male victims to speak out and say they were abused by nuns," James said. "This is the next wave of abuse claims we expect to see. They've been covered up, and we are here to uncover the truth."

St. Michael's Catholic School in Madison was overseen by the Diocese of New Ulm. Nuns from the School Sisters of Notre Dame Pacific Central Province, Inc., headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, taught at the school.

The lawsuit says both the Diocese and the School Sisters were negligent in allowing Sister Mary Regina to have unsupervised and unlimited access to young children and teenagers. The lawsuit also says that as a result of the sexual abuse, Dvorak suffered years of extreme anxiety and permanent emotional distress.

Craig Vernon, one of three attorneys representing Dvorak, said Sister Mary Regina's actions followed a pattern of abuse seen elsewhere, where nuns didn't just beat kids but also molested or sexually assaulted them.

"In some cases, the abuse has been just as bad as or worse than the abuse we've seen from priests," Vernon said. "Nun abuse often includes physical abuse and sometimes even masochism."

The School Sisters of Notre Dame are members of an international order of religious women, founded in Bavaria in 1833, according to the order's web site. The first sisters arrived in North America in 1847. The order devotes itself to primary, secondary and post-secondary education.

Dvorak's lawsuit marks the fourth lawsuit filed by James, Noaker and Vernon against the Diocese of New Ulm for child sexual abuse. The other lawsuits were filed on behalf of John Does 109, 114, and 116.

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Plaintiffs' attorneys:

James, Noaker and Vernon are veteran sex-abuse attorneys who successfully have represented hundreds of victims across the country. They teamed up last year to help child sexual-abuse survivors under Minnesota's new law allowing victims previously barred by statutes of limitation to bring forth claims and hold institutions accountable. They have pooled their resources, experience and legal staffs to take on powerful institutions, believing they could do more together than they could as individual attorneys.

Patrick Noaker of Noaker Law Office is an attorney with 23 years' experience, who has successfully represented hundreds of sex-abuse victims across the country against various religious entities. Minnesota Super Lawyers identifies him among the top attorneys in Minnesota.

Leander James is a longtime attorney with a nationwide practice. James has helped bring about institutional change for the protection of children and secured hundreds of millions of dollars in settlements and verdicts for abuse victims in cases against Catholic Dioceses and other religious organizations. James currently represents nearly 300 abuse survivors in a case against the Diocese of Helena, Montana. James also

represented 135 abuse victims in a Jesuit bankruptcy case in Portland, Oregon. James is managing partner at James Vernon and Weeks with offices in Seattle and in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

Craig Vernon has 20 years of litigation experience. In the past several years, Vernon has dedicated his practice to representing people who have been sexually abused by those in positions of power. Vernon has successfully secured multi-million dollar settlements and verdicts. He has represented survivors of sexual abuse in Montana, Hawaii, New York, Washington, and Minnesota as well as other states across the country. Vernon is a founding shareholder at James Vernon & Weeks, with offices in Seattle, Washington and Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

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