

# NEWS RELEASE



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ARCHDIOCESE of OMAHA

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**FOR RELEASE APRIL 20, 2010**

## **Former Omaha priest accused of sexual abuse of minor in Texas**

Archdiocese of Omaha seeks out potential victims

April 20, 2010 (OMAHA, NE) – The Archdiocese of Omaha has learned from a San Antonio Express-News report that one of its former priests, the Rev. John M. Fiala, SOLT, has been accused of sexually abusing a minor.

The abuse is alleged to have occurred in 2007-2008 when Fiala was serving at a parish in Rocksprings, Texas, located in the Archdiocese of San Antonio. The Express-News reported that Fiala is the subject of a civil lawsuit and criminal investigation in Texas. In an April 8 statement, the Archdiocese of San Antonio acknowledged receiving a complaint of interference in the custody of a minor against Fiala in the fall of 2008. This resulted in the removal of Fiala from ministry there. The Archdiocese of San Antonio indicates it is cooperating with law enforcement in an ongoing investigation.

According to the Rev. Joseph C. Taphorn, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha, Fiala was ordained in 1984 by Archbishop Daniel E. Sheehan. Fiala ministered in the Archdiocese until 1996, when he left to join The Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (SOLT), a society of apostolic life in Texas. Taphorn said Fiala served at the following parishes in the Archdiocese of Omaha between 1984 and 1995: St. Columbkille, Papillion; Sacred Heart, Norfolk; St. Joan of Arc, Omaha; St. Peter, Omaha; Christ the King, Omaha; St. Mary, Spencer; and St. Joseph, Wisner. An official with SOLT confirmed with the Archdiocese of Omaha that Fiala was removed from ministry in the fall of 2008 and has not been reassigned to priestly ministry.

In the spring of 2002, the Archdiocese of Omaha received a complaint that Fiala made sexual advances against an individual sometime in the mid-1980s, when the individual was a minor. The advances were purportedly refused by the individual. The archdiocese notified the Sarpy County Attorney and Fiala's religious superior in Texas, as well as the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas, where Fiala was serving at the time. The Archdiocese of Omaha is unaware of any criminal or civil charges being filed in connection with that report.

The Archdiocese of Omaha is committed to serving the needs of anyone who has been abused by any member of the clergy or Church employee. Taphorn said victims should contact him at 402.558.3100, or the Archdiocese's victim assistance coordinator, Mary Beth Hanus, at 888.808.9055 to report incidents of abuse.

(more)

In the last eight years, the Archdiocese of Omaha has implemented safe environment training programs for approximately 20,000 adults and 36,000 young people enrolled in its Catholic schools and religious education programs.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 148 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to 225,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 58 elementary schools, 18 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 58,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Family Life Office lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. [www.archomaha.org](http://www.archomaha.org)