

Suit alleges priest abused boy

SHELL LAKE-- A \$1 million civil lawsuit alleging a Spooner man was sexually abused 30 years ago by a priest at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, in Shell Lake, has been filed in Washburn County Circuit Court.

Also named as defendants in the suit are the Diocese of Superior and two insurance companies.

Plaintiff in the suit is a Spooner man called John Doe, with the real identity being made available to the defendants, according to court records.

The suit alleges that "During the late 1950's and early 1960's Father Augustyn, while purporting to engage in spiritual instruction and counseling, would invite parish boys to his rectory room, instruct the boys on sexuality and then sexually assault the boys."

The suit says the plaintiff was born and raised a devout Catholic and attended weekly mass. He was also in altar boy training. "In the course of his membership and

participation in defendant St. Joseph's Church, plaintiff came to know, admire, trust, revere and respect Father Augustyn, his priest, as a person of great influence and persuasion as a holy man and authority figure," says the suit.

The suit alleges the abuse took place from 1955 to 1961 during church sponsored functions and during religious instruction classes.

The suit alleges the Diocese of Superior was negligent in not removing the priest from his position. "Defendant Diocese by and through its agents, servants and employees knew or should reasonably have known of defendant Father Augustyn's dangerous and exploitive propensities as a child sexual abuser...." says the suit.