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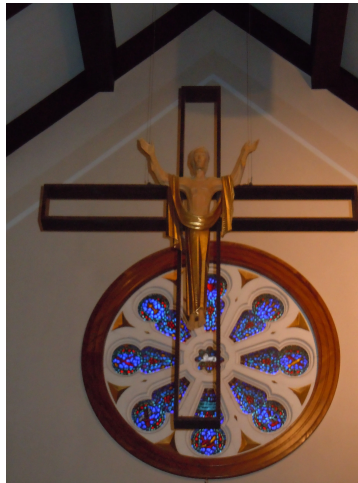
Longtime Tewksbury deacon relieved of his duties by Boston Archdiocese.



Bill Gilman, Patch Staff

Posted Tue, Mar 15, 2011 at 3:51 pm ET Updated Tue, Mar 15, 2011 at 3:53 pm ET

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A well-respected Tewksbury deacon with a long history of working to curb drug use among teens has been suspended indefinitely from his duties by the Archdiocese of Boston.

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Deacon William R. Emerson had his "faculties removed" by the Archdiocese a week ago after allegations surfaced related to his being fired from his part-time job with the Middlesex County House of Correction in Billerica.

Rumors have circulated as to the nature of those allegations but officials from the House of Correction and the Archdiocese have all declined comment on the specifics.

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According to a spokesman from the office of [Middlesex County District Attorney Gerry Leone](#), Emerson has not been charged with a crime.

Fr. John Hanley, pastor of the , where Emerson served, declined to discuss the case but expressed his spiritual support for Emerson.

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"We are just praying for Deacon Bill at this most difficult time in his life," said Fr. Hanley.

This past weekend, at the Saturday and Sunday services, Fr. Hanley read to the congregants of St. William a statement released by the Archdiocese relative to Deacon Emerson's situation.

The statement read as follows:

The Archdiocese of Boston has announced that the faculties of Deacon William R. Emerson have been removed in light of concerns that have come to our attention regarding his ministry as a prison chaplain. As this matter is being assessed, Deacon Emerson is not authorized to perform the duties of his ministry in the Archdiocese of Boston.

Deacon Emerson was ordained by the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska in 1973 and was granted faculties in the Archdiocese of Boston in 1982. Representatives of the Archdiocese have informed the Archdiocese of Omaha and the parish of St. William in Tewksbury where Deacon Emerson has been serving. We are continuing to review any further steps which might be taken based on the information we receive.

Given that this is now a legal matter the Archdiocese will defer further comment at this time. We pray for all impacted by today's developments.

Emerson was ordained a deacon in 1973. He served first in Omaha, Neb. and then moved to the Boston area in 1982. He worked full-time at the Middlesex County House of Correction from 2001-2009 and part-time since then.

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Emerson has been well-known in Tewksbury for his work with several local non-profits, including Tewksbury C.A.R.E.S. and the Tewksbury Chemical Abuse Committee.

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