

Priest accused of fondling 12-year-old

Tampa Tribune September 9, 1983

SANFORD (UPI) — An arrest warrant has been issued for a Roman Catholic priest accused of fondling a 12-year-old girl, but a state attorney told authorities to hold off on the arrest because of the "sensitive nature" of the case.

The warrant charges the **Rev. Eamon O'Dowd** with lewd and lascivious assault. **O'Dowd** allegedly fondled the breasts of the girl in her Seminole County home in January in an incident witnessed by the girl's mother, according to Seminole County detective Paul Jaynes.

The sheriff's department investigated two alleged assaults the mother and daughter said took place in the girl's bedroom about a week

apart, Jaynes said.

"Apparently it was a regular habit of his to put her to bed," Jaynes said. **O'Dowd** was at the home at least twice a month and sometimes as often as once a week, the detective said.

Brevard-Seminole State Attorney Doug Cheshire said Thursday he asked the sheriff's department to hold off serving the warrant pending further investigation.

"I did not feel it was necessary to have him turn himself in. He surrendered his passport to his attorney," Cheshire said.

Cheshire said arresting **O'Dowd** would start the state's speedy trial calendar before he had completed

his investigation. Cheshire did not disclose what remains to be done to complete the investigation.

Jaynes said **O'Dowd** has already received several psychiatric evaluations and that some psychiatrists had recommended that he "be placed in an in-patient treatment center immediately."

O'Dowd and his attorney, Chan Muller, declined comment on the case.

O'Dowd has been pastor at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Winter Haven since May 1982. Previously he was assistant pastor at St. Charles Catholic Church in Orlando and was an administrator at the Orlando church's elementary school.