

# Priest placed on leave after sex-abuse allegation

*Cockeysville parish is told of charge*

**By Frank P.L. Somerville**  
Staff Writer

Baltimore archdiocesan officials told members of St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Cockeysville last night that their associate pastor has been placed on administrative leave because of a child sex-abuse allegation.

The Rev. James H. Dowdy, 49, formerly pastor at two city churches and state chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, is accused of "inappropriate sexual contact" with a man who was 16 when an eight-year relationship reportedly began.

Father Dowdy is undergoing "psychological evaluation" at an unnamed institution and "is cooperating with the investigation," said Mark Pacione, a spokesman for the archdiocese.

Mr. Pacione said the allegations against Father Dowdy first surfaced in an anonymous phone call in late September from a man who is now in his 30s. The man told the archdiocese that he was in therapy and had

consulted a lawyer, but did not at first name his alleged abuser.

But because of details in the man's account, archdiocesan officials confronted Father Dowdy, and in a subsequent phone call the alleged victim named the priest, Mr. Pacione said.

At last night's crowded meeting in the school hall, St. Joseph's parishioners were told that the allegations had been reported, in accordance with state law, to the Baltimore County state's attorney.

Scott D. Shellenberger, an assistant county state's attorney in charge of prosecuting child abuse and sexual offenses, refused last night to comment on whether his office has begun an investigation.

The relationship is alleged to have occurred while Father Dowdy was associate pastor of St. Mark's Church in Catonsville in the late 1970s and pastor of St. Jerome's Church in Southwest Baltimore in the early 1980s.

**See PRIEST, 10B**

## From 1B

Monsignor W. Francis Malooly, chancellor of the archdiocese, and Monsignor Paul G. Cook, pastor of St. Joseph's, presided at last night's meeting attended by a standing-room crowd of more than 300 people. A lawyer for the archdiocese also attended.

Reporters were asked to leave so parishioners would feel free to ask questions, Mr. Pacione said.

Father **Dowdy**, who was ordained in 1969, is best known outside the Catholic Church for his neighborhood rehabilitation leadership in Southwest Baltimore in the 1980s, during the approximately 10 years he was pastor of St. Jerome's at West Hamburg and Scott streets.

Window flower boxes, outdoor brass lamps and fresh paint brightened the Pigtown-Washington Village area southwest of downtown during his presidency of Tri-Churches Housing Inc. — an ecumenical effort to counteract blight with the assistance of the Enterprise Foundation and the St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center.

Founded in 1985 to encourage affordable housing loans for residents on low and moderate incomes, the Tri-Churches consortium of St. Je-

rome's, St. Paul the Apostle Episcopal Church and Dorguth Memorial Methodist Church was joined in 1988 by Scott Street Baptist Church.

During the decade of his pastorate at St. Jerome's, Father **Dowdy** was also the state chaplain of the Knights of Columbus. Andrew C. Bauer, a layman who held the top office of state deputy of the organization part of that time, praised the priest's dedication and hard work, saying, "He did a lot for St. Jerome's.

"We've been on many trips together," Mr. Bauer said. "It's hard for me to believe anything like this about him."

The priest was pastor briefly in 1991 and 1992 at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church near Patterson Park in East Baltimore. From there, he was reassigned to St. Joseph's in Cockeysville as associate pastor after a sabbatical. In the 1970s, he served at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Woodlawn as well as at St. Mark's Church in Catonsville.

Father **Dowdy's** father is a retired city police officer, Mr. Bauer said.

The priest is the fifth in the archdiocese to be connected publicly with alleged sexual misconduct since a Baltimore County pastor committed suicide in August after being confronted with such an accusation.