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RETIRE PRIEST CHARGED WITH MASTURBATION-MOLEST OF 7-YEAR-OLD MALE PARISHIONER INSIDE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND IN PRIESTS' LIVING QUARTERS

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For Immediate Release

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Case # 09HF1289

Public Affairs Counsel

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***Criminal complaint was filed against same defendant in 2003 accusing him of molesting three other young male parishioners; Case dismissed by U.S. Supreme Court decision**

NEWPORT BEACH – The Orange County District Attorney (OCDA) filed charges today against a retired priest with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange County for molesting a young boy more than a decade ago in the rectory and sacristy at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Costa Mesa. Denis Lyons, 75, Seal Beach, has been charged with four felony counts of lewd acts on a child under 14 with a sentencing enhancement allegation for substantial sexual conduct with a child. If convicted on all charges, he faces a maximum sentence of 14 years in

"Our community has waited a long time for justice from this defendant. These types of crimes rob children of innocence and normal rites of passage into adulthood," said Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas. "For the last 10 years as I have served as the District Attorney, this Office has prosecuted a judge, police officers, teachers, religious leaders, coaches, and many others who hold positions of power and trust in our community. Our entire community feels great regret and sadness when these people are charged with these types of crimes, but it does remind us that no one is above the law. No matter what job they have or what position they hold in society, they should expect to face prosecution if they perpetrate these crimes."

Sexual Assault of John Doe #1

Between Jan. 1, 1992, and Dec. 31, 1995, Lyons is accused of molesting a young male student, John Doe #1, while the victim was a second and third grade student at St. John the Baptist Catholic School. The school was part of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in Costa Mesa, where Lyons served as a priest.

On four occasions, Lyons is accused of sexually assaulting the 7 to 9-year-old John Doe #1 by engaging in masturbation with the victim twice in his room in the parish rectory and twice in the church sacristy. A rectory is the residence and administrative office for the parish priests of a church. A sacristy is a room inside the church used to store religious garments, church documents, and sacred vessels.

In July 2008, an attorney, who had been hired by John Doe #1 to represent him in a civil case, contacted the OCDA to report that John Doe #1 had been molested by Lyons. John Doe #1 personally filed a report with the Costa Mesa Police Department (CMPD) in September 2008.

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