

PHILIPPINES

MOTHER AND SON ADD SEXUAL ABUSE TO COMPLAINTS AGAINST PASTOR

Updated: June 13, 2002 05:00 PM GMT

https://www.ucanews.com/story-archive/?post_name=/2002/06/14/mother-and-son-add-sexual-abuse-to-complaints-against-pastor&post_id=20810

A mother and son joined a movement for the removal of a pastor in the central Philippines alleging the priest sexually molested the son six years ago.

"What my son and I want is (the priest's) removal from our town, no more, no less," Luz Aluhipan told UCA News June 10.

Aluhipan said she wants Father Eleuterio Carton removed as parish priest of St. John of Sahagun Parish in Tigbauan town, Iloilo, 474 kilometers southeast of Manila. Aluhipan alleges Father Carton is sexually abusing young, innocent,

poor and "good-looking" boys in her town.

Sworn statements she and her son issued separately May 11 were "not motivated by politics or anybody," the mother said.

Father Carton told UCA News June 10 that he does not know the Aluhipan boy. Politics is behind the moves to oust him, the priest added.

Last year, parishioners had asked Archbishop Angel Lagdameo of Jaro, Iloilo, to change their pastor because he allegedly used the pulpit to campaign for a political candidate. However, the priest said his sermons merely stressed good

governance and dwelt on the qualities of a good politician.

Aluhipan and her son, now 23 and a soldier, are the first people in their archdiocese to issue an affidavit accusing a priest of sexual misconduct, said Father Emmanuel Trance, the archdiocese's spokesman.

He said the Aluhipans meant to support earlier petitions for Father Carton's removal and did not intend to file criminal charges against him.

Earlier, parishioners wrote to Archbishop Lagdameo that

Father Carton was incapable of performing his duties as he had an "infirm mind and body." They made allegations against him of politicking, mismanagement and corruption, saying the priest failed to account for donations from parishioners.

In his May affidavit, the Aluhipan boy wrote that he was "still very innocent" at 17 when Father Carton would "touch my crotch or caress my arms or my body," at the supper table. He and his friends visited the priest frequently in his rectory, the soldier said.

"When I asked permission to go home in the evening, he would press his body toward my back and give me any amount, enough to make me come back the next afternoon," he wrote.

He said the priest had fondled his genitals during a beach outing. Later, other boys told him the pastor fondled theirs too but they could not complain because the priest paid for their schooling, the affidavit read.

Aluhipan said she refused to allow the priest to sponsor her son's schooling because she suspected his motives.

"He (the son) told me Father Carton wanted to make him a scholar provided he live with him in the convent and go

with him anywhere he wants," Aluhipan wrote.

She told UCA News that such behavior "has caused me to lose respect for Father Carton and has weakened my faith in the Church."

The pastor went on vacation in late 2001 while an archdiocesan council investigated the parishioners' earlier complaints. The priest returned to St. John of Sahagun Parish in March before the archdiocese announced the results of its investigation.

Father Trance explained that the archdiocese wants to study carefully claims that political motives were behind the charges against the priest.

Hundreds of parishioners signed a letter to Archbishop Lagdameo supporting Father Carton, he noted.

Meanwhile, the archbishop has called Catholics in Jaro to join their priests in praying for the intentions of "sanctifying the clergy," and unlocking "the barriers of pain" so that justice, healing and renewal can reign.

END