

Prosecutors look into priest's '70s relationship with teen boy

Associated Press

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — A man who as a teen-ager had a sexual relationship with a priest more than 20 years ago believes the Evansville Roman Catholic Diocese should remove the priest from an active ministry.

Diocese officials gave information Monday to prosecutors about the Rev. Michael Allen's relationship with the then-16-year-old.

Allen, pastor of St. Peter Celestine Church in Celestine, told parishioners Sunday about the mid-1970s relationship. Church members applauded after Bishop Gerald Gettelfinger said Allen would remain as pastor.

The teen with whom Allen had the relationship, David Prunty, is now a 42-year-old social worker living in Minnesota. He told the Evansville Courier & Press for a story Tuesday that he had long been waiting to hear church officials acknowledge the relationship.

"It's affirmation after all these years that what happened to me was harmful. Finally, I'm no longer alone," Prunty said.

He also said he thinks Allen should be punished like any other professional who had violated the ethical standards of care.

"Every parent in every parish in the Evansville diocese must be asking themselves the same question: 'Are my children really safe?'" Prunty said.

The relationship between Prunty and Allen lasted more than a year. It started after the priest began counseling Prunty, who had been hospitalized for depression after the death of his father. At the time, Allen was an associate pastor at St. Joseph Church in Princeton.

Gettelfinger became bishop in 1989. Prunty first wrote to him about the relationship in 1993, and the bishop called Allen out of active Army duty in South Korea.

The diocese acknowledged the relationship in a letter to Prunty in 1994 but refused a request from his attorney for \$150,000 in damages. In 1998, Prunty sent a letter to the bishop threatening to make his story public.

The newspaper on Sunday reported the allegations against Allen.

It also reported allegations against the Rev. Mark Kurzendoerfer, 47, who lives at a church in Haubstadt and is associate pastor of churches in Oakland City and Princeton.

Kurzendoerfer had a relationship with a 14-year-old boy at Washington Catholic High School in 1981, according to diocese documents.

Kurzendoerfer's status is being



Bob Gwaltney / Associated Press

Under scrutiny: Church members were happy to hear the Rev. Michael Allen would stay as pastor of St. Peter Celestine Church at Celestine, in Dubois County. Allen told parishioners Sunday about his relationship with a teen.

reassessed, said Paul Leingang, a spokesman for the diocese.

Gettelfinger said diocese officials met with Knox County prosecutors in Vincennes, where Allen lived for a time during his relationship with Prunty.

The legal age of sexual consent in

Indiana is 16, and that law applied at the time of Allen's relationship with Prunty.

Knox County Prosecutor John Sievers said criminal charges against Allen are unlikely, but that he would review the laws in effect at the time and the statute of limitations.