

# Priest admits assaulting youth

A well-liked Roman Catholic priest who serves as chaplain at Mercy Hospital pleaded guilty to an assault charge resulting from sexual advances he made on a 16-year-old male.

The Rev. Lawrence Hartwig, 43, pleaded guilty to the reduced charge of simple assault in 14th Circuit Court Tuesday and was sentenced by Judge John H. Piercey to pay \$100 court costs. Hartwig was originally charged with gross indecency between males, a felony carrying a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

A spokesperson at Mercy Hospital said Hartwig, who was ordained in 1967, has been on personal leave from his chaplain's post for several weeks.

State police in Grand Haven arrested Hartwig Aug. 26 following a complaint by a protective services worker at the Muskegon County Department of Social Services.

According to police, Hartwig met the youth at Mercy Hospital and took him to a home in Whitehall which Hartwig was watching for its owners. Hartwig and the boy shared the only bed in the house, and the boy awoke the next morning with Hartwig making physical advances on him, police said, adding that it was Hartwig's first known offense.

Officials at the Diocese of Grand Rapids said they were not aware of the charge and would have no comment.