

Accused Morristown monk has tie to Paterson

By **MAYA KREMEN**
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A Benedictine monk recently alleged to have sexually abused a minor in a Morris County monastery also served in a Diocese of Paterson parish, the diocese said Wednesday.

Earlier this year, the Rev. Robert Flavin, who most recently was a volunteer deacon at a Randolph parish, was accused of inappropriate conduct against a minor in 1978. The abuse was said to have occurred when Flavin was at St. Mary's Abbey in Morristown, and the alleged victim was a student at the Delbarton School, which is staffed by the

monks. The incident was submitted to the Morris County Prosecutor's Office by the diocese and the monastery, according to both organizations. The prosecutor's office would not comment on the case.

The alleged victim came forward in 1992, but at that point he reported only that he had been abused in 1981, after he was 18, said the Rev. Elias R. Lorenzo, the abbot of St. Mary's. It wasn't until August that the accuser said that something had also happened in 1978, when he was a sophomore, and a minor, Lorenzo said.

The nature of the first period of abuse is not clear, but Lorenzo

and a friend of the victim's confirmed that it was not physical in nature. Neither Flavin nor the alleged victim, now 40, could be reached for comment.

Flavin, who was known as "Brother Malachy," left St. Mary's in 1987 after living at

the monastery for 12 years. He asked to be removed from his monastic vows and was granted that request, according to Lorenzo. From 1999 to 2001, he was a volunteer deacon at the Resurrection R.C. Church in Randolph.

The Diocese of Paterson said that the order never informed it of the first period of abuse.

"We knew nothing about the accusations since the spring of 2002," said Marianna Thomson, the diocesan spokeswoman. "By the time we had heard about the incident, he was gone."

According to Lorenzo, the alleged victim requested that the matter be kept quiet.

"We didn't reveal the information about the first period of abuse because of victim confidentiality," Lorenzo said.

Besides this case, St. Mary's is dealing with two other accusations. One is from a former monk who claims he was abused while in the monastery; another is from a former student who says he was

sexually abused as a minor. These allegations come after another St. Mary's monk, the Rev. Timothy J. Brennan, who pleaded guilty to sexual contact with a minor in 1987, was removed from active service in March.

Regarding the accusations against Flavin, Lorenzo expressed some regret about the way the situation was handled.

"In hindsight, no matter how a victim asks for confidentiality, we probably would promote more openness," he said.

Reach Maya Kremen at
(973) 569-7168 or
kremenm@northjersey.com.