

9/30/07 - Allegations of abuse made against Trenton, NJ priest
BY MATT PAIS, Asbury Park Press

TUCKERTON — The Diocese of Trenton has removed a priest at St. Theresa's Parish after learning of allegations that he sexually molested a juvenile over a period of several years in the late 1980s and 1990s.

The Rev. Terence O. McAlinden, who served at St. Theresa's for more than 20 years, is no longer permitted to "exercise his priestly ministry, wear clerical garb or present himself as a priest in the Diocese of Trenton or anywhere," according to a statement issued by the diocese Saturday.

The diocese received a complaint about McAlinden less than a week ago, said spokeswoman Rayanne Bennett. The complaint was forwarded to Trenton by the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office.

Capt. Michael Mohel of the Prosecutor's Office said his office first learned of the allegations last month. The victim, now in his mid-30s, said he had suffered a continued pattern of sexual molestation.

No charges were filed against McAlinden, however, because the five-year statute of limitations on such crimes had since expired, Mohel said.

"We couldn't prosecute the case, so it was submitted from our sex crimes unit to the Diocese of Trenton," he said.

The claims of abuse were, "deemed credible," by a Diocesan review board, Bennett said, and McAlinden was stripped of his duties.

Known as "Father Mac" to parishioners, McAlinden spearheaded the building of a new 1,200-seat church that opened in 2006. The church, on Radio Road, cost more than \$5 million to build.

Church officials could not be reached for comment on Saturday.

In a letter to the St. Theresa Parish community, Bishop John M. Smith said the diocese "is taking the steps necessary to follow through on this complaint so that the rights of all parties will be handled respectfully."

Monsignor Hugh F. Ronan, a priest of the diocese, has been appointed to serve as temporary administrator of St. Theresa Parish.