

May 12, 2007 - Abusive priest leaves Connecticut
Hartford Courant, by Elizabeth Hamilton

The Rev. Stephen Foley, a Catholic priest accused of molesting boys while serving as a police and fire chaplain, has left St. Thomas Seminary in Bloomfield and is living out of state.

The Hartford Archdiocese, which pulled Foley from active ministry in 1993, when an allegation of sexual abuse was made against the priest, would not disclose Friday where Foley has moved.

"The administration knows where he is living, but that is personnel information and not for publication," said the Rev. John Gatzak, spokesman for the diocese. The archdiocese is still paying Foley a stipend and providing him with benefits, he said.

Hartford church officials have notified the diocese where Foley has moved, Gatzak said, under the rules of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops passed in June 2002.

This is done so that Foley, or any other priest removed from ministry because of sexual abuse allegations, cannot pass himself off as a priest in good standing.

Gatzak also said that Foley is no longer driving the police-equipped Crown Victoria that Archbishop Henry Mansell ordered him to sell in March. Foley's ownership of the car, which looked like an unmarked state police cruiser, was controversial because many of the men who have accused him of sexual abuse said he used his position as chaplain, and his car, to lure them.

Mansell ordered Foley to sell the car and move out of the seminary several days after stories in The Courant revealed that the priest was still driving the Crown Victoria, complete with flashing lights, sirens and radios, even though he was no longer a police or fire chaplain.

At least 11 men have accused Foley of sexual abuse since 1993, when he was removed from his Glastonbury parish and placed at the seminary, where he performed no duties but received free room and board, a monthly stipend of more than \$1,000 and health insurance.

Foley continued to serve as chaplain to the Hartford Fire Department and the New England Association of Fire Chiefs throughout the 1990s and was chaplain for the Connecticut State Police until December 1994. A state police investigation of the molestation complaints against Foley was opened in 1993, but prosecutors refused to sign an arrest warrant because the statute of limitations had expired.

In 2002, when the first lawsuit was brought against Foley and the archdiocese, church leaders ordered the priest not to wear the Roman collar.

He has not been stripped of his status as a priest, or laicized. That is a lengthy process that requires permission from the pope. Gatzak said it can also leave the public more vulnerable.

"One of the reasons [Foley] was living at the seminary is because while he was there the archdiocese could keep an eye on him," Gatzak said. "It is also one of the logical explanations for why he hasn't been laicized."

Most of the men who have sued Foley were young Catholics involved in youth basketball or religious education at the time of the alleged abuse. They said in lawsuits and interviews that they were attracted by the lights and sirens on the priest's car and the access he had to fire and accident scenes.

The Hartford archdiocese has refused to say how much it has paid in settlements related to Foley, but the total is believed to be significantly more than \$5 million.