

2-4-08 - PRIEST IS 'OUT'

By DAN MANGAN, New York Post

A popular Catholic chaplain at SUNY Maritime College in The Bronx has been fired and barred from acting as a priest after The Post told church officials that he has lived with another man in a pricey Manhattan one-bedroom apartment for years.

The Rev. Michael Moynihan's suspension as a cleric late last week comes a year after he resigned as the beloved pastor of a ritzy Connecticut parish amid a financial scandal there.

And it came after his Bridgeport [Conn.] Diocese bosses - who earlier caught Moynihan lying about the existence of secret bank accounts at his former parish - learned that the dapper, white-haired cleric misled them about living with a man in Midtown.

That roommate - a handsome television actor and singer named Michael Fawcett - for years was the children's choir director at Moynihan's ex-parish, St. Michael the Archangel in Greenwich, Conn.

Moynihan, 55, now is not allowed to wear clerical garb, perform Roman Catholic church sacraments other than saying Mass for himself, or otherwise publicly act as a priest.

He resigned as St. Michael's pastor in January 2007, much to the dismay of many parishioners, after a probe found he had spent more than \$500,000 in church funds from two secret bank accounts he had set up without being able to properly document the expenditures.

Despite losing his Connecticut job, Moynihan for the past year remained a priest in good standing and continued working as the longtime chaplain at SUNY Maritime College, a staterun school in the Throgs Neck section of The Bronx.

But that ended last week, when The Post told a spokesman for the Bridgeport Diocese that the priest's landlord had confirmed that Moynihan lived with Fawcett, 53, in a rented co-op unit at 300 E. 40th St. "Moynihan has lived with Fawcett for about a decade in the one-bedroom apartment, which rents for an estimated \$3,000 to \$4,000 per month, according to commercial database records.

On Friday, the Bridgeport Diocese issued a statement saying that prior to the financial scandal at St. Michael the Archangel, allegations had been made that Moynihan had "an improper relationship with" Fawcett, which "were vigorously denied by Father Moynihan and could not be substantiated.

"Nonetheless, Father Moynihan was asked to end all affiliation with [Fawcett] to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, so as not to undermine the church's mission," the diocese said.

Moynihan did not return requests for comment. "I don't have any comment," said Fawcett, who has appeared on an episode of "Law and Order."