

4-11-08 -Settlement No. 3: Latest priest sex-abuse agreement will cost the archdiocese \$4.7 million more
By MARY NEVANS-PEDERSON, Telegraph Herald (IA) staff writer

For the third time in as many years, the Archdiocese of Dubuque announced a legal settlement with men and women who were abused as children by its priests.

The archdiocese will pay a total of \$4.7 million to 18 claimants who suffered abuse at the hands of archdiocesan priests in incidents that spanned five decades. The settlement was announced Thursday in Waterloo, Iowa, by attorneys for the victims and by the archdiocese in a press release from its headquarters in Dubuque. The action heads off potential lawsuits by the claimants against the archdiocese.

This settlement reportedly is the second largest paid to clergy abuse victims by the archdiocese. In 2006, 20 victims were paid \$5 million and last year, nine victims received \$2.6 million.

But there might be more victims, claims and settlements ahead.

Waterloo attorneys Chad Swanson and Thomas Staack claim the 47 people who were part of the three settlements are only the tip of the iceberg. Many abuse victims either haven't come forward yet with abuse claims or haven't joined in a settlement, although some of them have testified on behalf of other victims, Staack said.

"Most likely there will be a fourth group and probably beyond that because we don't believe we've gotten through the number of victims that are still out there," Staack said Thursday, according to the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier.

Through their attorneys, the current group of claimants urged "others who may be struggling with the pain and shame of clergy abuse" to come forward with their stories.

Details of the current settlement were negotiated during March. Each claimant provided written statements about the abuse and its effect, was questioned under oath and was examined by psychologists from both sides.

Dubuque Archbishop Jerome Hanus said the payments will come from two sources: From outside insurance and from self-insurance. The archdiocese's finance council approved borrowing from other archdiocesan funds to supplement the self-insurance plan, he said.

Nine priests were named as abusers by the 18 victims. Six of the priests have been named in previous settlements: The Revs. Albert Carman, William Goltz, Robert Reiss and Robert Swift, all of whom have died, and Tim DeVenney and Allen Schmitt, who are both still living but have been removed from the ministry.

In January 1997, DeVenney, then 33, pleaded guilty to eight counts of lascivious acts with a child and four counts of

assault with the intent to commit sexual abuse and was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He served four years and lives near Washington, D.C. Schmitt lives in Dubuque and works at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Center. When asked why an accused priest still is employed by the archdiocese, Hanus said, "He needs to earn a living and he has a skill which can be put to use," adding that "supervision is in place."

This settlement includes three new priests:

* Rev. Robert Saunders, who was first publicly identified as an abuser in his obituary in July 2007. After his ordination in 1941, Saunders worked locally at parishes in Farley, Garber and Temple Hill and at Loras Academy. He is accused of sexual abuse at Temple Hill and in Norway, Iowa, sometime during the years 1959 to 1973.

* Rev. John Reed, who was ordained in 1949 and died in 1976. He was accused of abusing a child when he was an assistant pastor at Dubuque's St. Mary Parish in 1963 and 1964.

* Rev. Louis Wendling, ordained in 1939 and died in 1969. Wendling served parishes locally in Bellevue, Key West and at Sacred Heart in Dubuque. Although archdiocese officials determined the 1947 claim against Wendling (from when he worked at Mt. Mercy College in Cedar Rapids) "had not been substantiated," it was part of the current settlement "so resolution could be reached" and a lawsuit avoided, Hanus said.

Besides the monetary payments, the settlement requires the archdiocese to remove images of the accused priests from churches, schools and other facilities, to allow victims to speak about their abuse at a Sunday Mass in their home parishes or where they were abused and to pay for 12 counseling sessions. In addition, Hanus agreed to issue a public apology to all victims of archdiocesan clergy abuse.

"The trust you had in God and in the Catholic Church and its leaders may have been weakened or destroyed because of the abuse you suffered. I pray to God that it may be restored," he wrote. (Read Hanus' entire apology message at THonline.com).

The attorneys offered each of the victims a chance to speak to the media Thursday, but they all declined.

Although his clients are receiving monetary compensation, Swanson said, "It will never be sufficient to compensate these claimants for all of the years of living with the shame, embarrassment and stigma of the abuse."

While he applauded the victims for coming forward, Steve Theisen, director of the Iowa chapter of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, railed against the archdiocese saying it "knew of these abuses and did not report these crimes to law enforcement, did not warn parents and did not inform parishioners."