

Diocese settles two lawsuits involving ex-Lodi priest

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News-Sentinel Staff Writer | Posted: Thursday, March 24, 2005 10:00 pm

The Stockton Catholic Diocese has agreed to pay out a combined \$3.6 million to two people who claimed that former Lodi Priest Oliver O'Grady sexually abused them when they were children, according a prepared statement released by the diocese.

Each will receive \$1.8 million, the Diocese said.

Details on the two cases, however, were not available.

Seth Schwartz, a Walnut Creek attorney representing the diocese, said Thursday that a protective order prevents him from revealing information on the case as basic as when the alleged offenses took place, the victims' gender and their ages at the time they were reportedly abused.

"If their lawyers choose to give information, so be it," Schwartz said.

Attorneys Jeff Silvia and Gregory Davenport, who represent the plaintiffs, were unavailable for comment.

The settlements involve two of seven lawsuits filed against the diocese that allege sexual misconduct by O'Grady, a priest at St. Anne's Catholic Church in Lodi from 1971 to 1978. All seven suits were filed in 2003 after the state Legislature waived the statute of limitations on old clergy abuse cases if suits were filed during the 2003 calendar year.

After leaving St. Anne's, O'Grady was transferred to Catholic churches in Stockton, Turlock, Hughson and San Andreas. He served seven years at Mule Creek State Prison in Ione after pleading guilty in 1993 to four counts of sexual abuse with children under 14. He was paroled in late 2000 and deported to his native Ireland a short time later.

"The diocese is pleased to bring these matters to closure for those involved and looks forward to continuing its effort to reach fair and just resolutions for the victims of childhood sexual abuse," according to a written statement by Stockton Diocese Bishop Stephen Blaire.

The two \$1.8 million settlements will be paid fully by the diocese's insurance company, Blaire said in his statement.

The diocese has 32 parishes and 12 mission churches in San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Tuolumne, Calaveras, Alpine and Mono counties.

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