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## Marlborough not spared priest abuse scandal

**By Jennifer Kavanaugh**

Sunday, December 22, 2002

MARLBOROUGH -- For the past year, Marlborough had seemingly escaped the ever-expanding reach of the archdiocese's sex abuse scandal, even as allegations surfaced in neighboring Hudson and other towns.

But in a painful week for the city's Catholics, newly released church files contain accusations that three priests and one Franciscan brother connected to Marlborough parishes abused boys. In addition to the two accused from Immaculate Conception, St. Mary's and St. Ann's parishes have each had a former priest turn up in the files.

"It's very disappointing," said City Councilor Edward Clancy, a longtime member of Immaculate Conception. He said he learned of the allegations only this past week. "Growing up, we respected all the priests. We never suspected anything."

But according to newly released church files, the replacement for a priest accused of molesting three brothers while at Immaculate Conception two decades ago later admitted to having sex with a boy during that time.

The Rev. Paul Tivnan, 66, who served as Immaculate Conception's associate pastor from April 1983 until May 1985, allegedly molested two boys in the 1970s and 1980s. Revelations about his sexual relationship with the second boy drove him out of Marlborough and into a Maryland program for sexually troubled priests.

Tivnan had come to Marlborough just as another associate pastor was ending a 10-year stay at the parish. The Rev. Benjamin McMahon, 60, allegedly molested three siblings during that time, though archdiocese officials did not learn about those allegations until much later.

Released on Wednesday, 600 pages of church files document Tivnan's four-decade career, which included allegations of sexual abuse, extensive medical treatments and parish stints in both Sudbury and Needham.

"The accusation is that Paul Tivnan while stationed in Sudbury, Needham and Marlboro(ugh) has used his office to gain sexual satisfaction with these youths," wrote the Rev. John McCormack on May 11, 1985, two days before he got Tivnan pulled from Marlborough and put on sick leave.

A top deputy to Cardinal Bernard Law in 1985 and now bishop of Manchester, N.H., McCormack oversaw Tivnan's case, tracking his treatment for pedophilia, making sure his medical bills got paid, and even helping him escape prosecution by the Middlesex County District Attorney's Office, records show.

## Misplaced trust

According to the files, connections to the Marlborough parishes vary in degree. Of the three, Immaculate Conception has been the hardest hit this week by the documents released by Greenberg Traurig, one of the law firms representing clients suing the Archdiocese of Boston.

First news came out that McMahon, the parish's associate pastor from 1973 to 1983, allegedly molested three of nine siblings from a Marlborough family around 1980. The boys' parents had entrusted McMahon to babysit their children and accompany them on trips to Cape Cod.

After Marlborough, McMahon went on to two more parishes before leaving the priesthood altogether in 1986. Five years later, the three brothers accused McMahon of molesting them. The associate pastor at the time, Walter Cuenin, reported McMahon to church officials.

Under MacCormack's direction, the archdiocese paid for the family's counseling. McMahon never faced criminal charges. He now lives on the Cape and did not return phone calls for comment.

"He was a very nice fellow, as far as I knew, and was a good priest," Clancy said, echoing views expressed by other parishioners. "Then he was gone."

McMahon's replacement, Tivnan, had long expressed an interest in working with children. On a 1968 personnel form, he checked off "youth work" and "high school chaplain" as two of his preferred assignments.

But according to church files, Tivnan was already having trouble handling his relationships with youngsters. In 1974, while stationed at Our Lady of Grace in Chelsea, he allegedly molested a 12-year-old boy from a broken home.

Tivnan allegedly came into the boy's room, and "stretched out over the boy, `praying, talking to God,'" and then molested him, according to the files.

Neither Tivnan nor his attorney, Anthony Turco, returned calls for this story.

The alleged victim didn't come forward until 1994, when he was 32 and a recovering alcoholic. According to the files, the man told church officials that a Baptist minister who lived across the street had also molested him for 10 years beginning when he was 9 years old. He said he had just assumed that "this is what old men do."

Four years later, while associate pastor of Our Lady of Fatima in Sudbury, Tivnan met the second boy, then 9, described in the files as being "from a troubled family." Sometime within the next year, according to the boy, Tivnan threw himself on the boy and molested him.

According to notes made by McCormack, Tivnan and the boy "would regularly have sex twice a week until the end of April this year (1985)." The boy had apparently denied the relationship to his parents, but then came forward weeks after his association with Tivnan ended.

That spring, the archdiocese sent Tivnan to St. Luke's Institute in Maryland, where he was treated along with other troubled priests. McCormack urged for a discreet removal, and had someone else collect Tivnan's belongings from Marlborough.

"I told him it was not good to have him seen in Marlboro(ugh), Needham or Sudbury," McCormack wrote. "Therefore, he was not to go there and engage himself with parishioners. If he needed to go to the Rectory, do it quietly."



(under 10)."

Breton was suspended from his Marlborough post after a city resident accused him of abuse.

After that, Breton's next assignment was as a chaplain at Holy Ghost Hospital in Cambridge. After making his rounds at the hospital, Breton on several occasions violently raped a 15-year-old boy, while wearing only his Roman collar, according to the records. According to the boy, Breton threatened to kill him if he told anyone.

Breton went on to several other parishes, including ones in Maynard, Salem and Beverly. He continued to have contact with children, including coaching hockey teams and taking children on field trips.

*(News staff writers Liz Banks and Kristen Bradley contributed to this report.)*

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