

8-7-08 - Jurors find for plaintiff in Belleville abuse case
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BELLEVILLE, Ill. (AP) - A St. Clair County jury has awarded \$5 million to a man who sued the Diocese of Belleville, saying it covered up alleged sexual abuse by a priest in the 1970s.

The jury on Wednesday evening found the diocese "fraudulently concealed" James Wisniewski's (wihs-NOO'-skees) claims.

Wisniewski, of Champaign, filed a civil lawsuit in 2002. The Belleville News-Democrat says he called Wednesday a "great day" for him and other abuse victims.

The 47-year-old Wisniewski says the Reverend Raymond Kownacki allegedly molested him when he was an altar boy.

Former Belleville Bishop Wilton Gregory testified that key documents about Kownacki were kept from him. Gregory removed Kownacki from the active ministry in 1995.

Kownacki isn't charged criminally. The diocese didn't immediately return messages.