

8-1-08 - Priest from Albany linked to abuse case: Cleric now deceased got post in Canada after sodomy conviction

By MARC PARRY, Staff writer , Albany Times Union (NY)

ALBANY -- A victims support group on Thursday issued a public call for information about crimes committed by a deceased Albany Roman Catholic Diocese priest, one day after his name surfaced in a Canadian sexual abuse inquiry.

The Albany Diocese removed the Rev. Carl Stone from ministry in 1981, spokesman Ken Goldfarb said Thursday. That came after he pleaded guilty in Albany County Court to sodomy charges stemming from an indictment that alleged sex with two teenage brothers in Colonie.

But Stone, who had also served in the Ogdensburg Diocese, got a new job ministering at two facilities in Canada after his conviction, according to an article published Wednesday by the Ottawa Sun.

"More than six years ago, America's Catholic bishops promised to be 'open and transparent' about child sex crimes and cover-ups," Barbara Dorris, national outreach director of Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, said in a statement. "Yet the Albany and Ogdensburg parishioners and the public have been told nothing about Fr. Carl Stone."

In response to an inquiry from the Times Union, Goldfarb released a statement saying, "The Albany Diocese was not aware until publication of a recent Canadian newspaper story that he apparently functioned as a priest in a limited ministry in Cornwall, Ontario, for a period of time after leaving Albany."

The newspaper reported Eugene LaRocque, a former Catholic bishop in Canada, told a Cornwall abuse inquiry on Wednesday that he knowingly recruited Stone after "an affair with boys." Rocque was also aware that there had been accusations made against Stone decades earlier when he was with the Ogdensburg Diocese, the Sun reported.

LaRocque got a job for Stone ministering in the Cornwall area on the condition he not be alone with kids, the paper reported. He worked at a Cornwall care home called St. Joseph's Villa and a treatment center near St. Raphael's called Mount Carmel House.

"I was trying to take every precaution, to give this man a chance," said LaRocque, 81, according to the newspaper.

Stone died in 2006 at the age of 90 at Teresian House in Albany, according to an obituary published in Press Republican newspaper in Plattsburgh.

The obituary offered few biographical details beyond the date of his birth in the Franklin County community of Malone: April 27, 1916.

In 1981, the Times Union reported that Stone, 65, of Columbia County, pleaded guilty to sodomy. The charges stemmed from sex with two teenage brothers off Crescent Road in Colonie. Stone was placed on probation for five years.

None of three 1981 newspaper stories on the case identified Stone as a priest. But the articles list his attorney as Michael Costello, a longtime lawyer for the Albany Catholic Diocese.

During Stone's priesthood in the Albany Diocese, which the Ottawa Sun reported lasted about 11 years, he served in Oneonta, Amsterdam, Gloversville, Morris, South Kortright and Davenport, Goldfarb said.

Stone is one of 21 Albany Diocese priests who have been removed from ministry since 1950 because the diocese concluded there were grounds to believe they had sexually abused minors or otherwise violated the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, Goldfarb said.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted the charter in 2002. It imposed a zero-tolerance rule for priests who abused children and called for "openness" in such cases. The policy did not explicitly call for public notification of the priests' removal.

The Albany Diocese encourages anyone who was sexually abused by clergy to contact law enforcement authorities or diocesan assistance coordinator Theresa Rodrigues "so that the matter can be investigated and assistance provided to the victim," Goldfarb said.

Bishop Howard Hubbard, who has led the diocese since 1977, has apologized for his handling of clergy sex abuse, saying, "I know that in the past I did not handle these matters with the transparency and accountability which are proper and necessary."

Stone applied for Canadian citizenship and was on probation when he came to the Cornwall area in Canada, according to Thursday's article in the Sun.

In 1985, LaRocque fired Stone after learning of new accusations about the priest inviting young men to his room at St. Joseph's Villa, according to the Sun.

Dorris, the SNAP outreach director, urged anyone in New York who "saw, suspected or suffered crimes by Stone" to "come forward, call police, and get help."

"When victims and witnesses stay silent, nothing changes," Dorris said. "But when they speak up, there's at least a chance for healing, justice and prevention."