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Priest sent to prison for sexually assaulting teenager

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AP Photo pursuing lawtvfls

NEW BRITAIN, Conn. (AP) _ A Polish priest was sentenced Thursday to nine months in prison for sexually assaulting a 17-year-old girl.

The Rev. Roman Kramek was sentenced in New Britain Superior Court as part of a plea deal he struck with prosecutors last year.

Kramek was arrested in December 2002 after the girl said the priest sexually assaulted her while he was counseling her for a prior assault. Kramek later told police he had a sexual relationship with the girl, but said it was part of her therapy.

Kramek was a visiting priest at Sacred Heart Parish in New Britain. Under state law, it is illegal for psychotherapists or clergy members to have sex with anyone they are counseling.

After being sentenced Thursday morning, Kramek was led away by judicial marshals to begin serving his term. He is expected to be deported to Poland after he is released from prison and a judge said Thursday that he would not be allowed back to the United States.

"He's relying on his faith to see him through this adversity, and he knows that through his faith he will be forgiven," said Kramek's attorney, William F. Dow III.

A statement from the teenage victim was read aloud in court Thursday.

"As far as the priest who not only hurt me physically but mentally and spiritually, I forgive him because I don't want to hold a grudge," the victim said in the statement.

Members of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests attended the sentencing Thursday and said they were disappointed that Kramek did not offer an apology to the victim. They also said they intended to write a letter to Hartford Archbishop Henry Mansell, asking him to notify authorities in Poland of Kramek's conviction.

"Because it's not just American children we need to protect, it's all children in all countries," said Landa Mauriello-Vernon, state director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests.