

Bridgeport Diocese releases documents on abuse case to newspapers

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. – The Diocese of Bridgeport announced Dec. 1 it has released thousands of pages of court documents related to clergy sexual abuse cases that were settled in 2001.

In a press release, the diocese said it had complied with court orders to turn over the documents to the Superior Court in Waterbury and to the attorneys for the four newspapers that sued to obtain the material.

On Nov. 2 the U.S. Supreme Court declined to accept the diocese's appeal of the Connecticut Supreme Court's ruling that the papers must be released, ending years of appeals.

The 12,000 pages of documents include materials submitted to trial courts by the diocese preceding the settlement of 23 lawsuits involving six priests.

Most of the lawsuits were settled for undisclosed amounts in 2001, with the agreement that the individual settlements and the documents should remain sealed. But Connecticut courts ruled that materials submitted as part of pretrial proceedings could be turned over to the newspapers that sued for access.

Since 2002, the newspapers – The New York Times, the Hartford Courant, the Boston Globe and The Washington Post – have been pursuing the case through the courts.

In its Dec. 1 statement, the diocese noted that all of the material had been shared with the abuse victims during pretrial proceedings.

The statement said the documents, consolidated on CD-ROMs, were delivered to the court and the newspapers' attorneys. It said other parties interested in copies should contact the Superior Court in Waterbury.