

Pittsburgh Diocese sued after suicide of man who said priest sexually abused him

PITTSBURGH - The Diocese of Pittsburgh has denied any negligence or wrongdoing in the case of a man who had alleged he was abused by a diocesan priest as a child in the early 1980s and committed suicide in May.

A lawsuit filed in Allegheny County Common Pleas Court on behalf of the estate of Michael R. Unglo, 39, contends that the diocese had stopped paying for Unglo's psychiatric care before he took his own life May 4 while a patient at Austen Riggs Center in Stockbridge, Mass.

The diocese said in a July 29 statement it had not been formally notified of the lawsuit, but that it "denies any negligence in this matter and cannot accept that any action of the diocese contributed to or was responsible for his death."

"The facts of the case will bear this out," the statement added.

Unglo had said he was abused by then-Father Richard J. Dorsch between 1982 and 1985 at All Saints Church in Etna, beginning when Unglo was 10. Dorsch, who "cannot function or represent himself as a priest," according to the diocese, was convicted in 1994 for molesting another boy and subsequently served time in prison.

Dorsch was removed from priestly ministry in 1996. Years later, Unglo made his allegations. However, no criminal or civil charges were filed against Dorsch in relation to the allegations.

"Without any legal requirement to do so, the Diocese of Pittsburgh readily provided hundreds of thousands of dollars for counseling and residential treatment for Mr. Unglo in recent years and continued to do so up to the time of his tragic death," the diocese's statement said.

"Suicide is a complex tragedy that can deeply affect surviving loved one," it added.

“We continue to offer our sympathy, prayers and support to all touched by this tragedy.”

Alan R. Perer, an attorney representing the Unglo family, said at a July 29 news conference in Pittsburgh that Unglo “paid the ultimate price for being sexually abused as a child by a priest.”

Perer acknowledged that the diocese spent an estimated \$300,000 for Unglo’s psychiatric treatment in New York, Baltimore and Massachusetts but said it made a final payment of \$75,000 in March, stating that no further funding would be provided for his treatment.

Unglo had made two previous suicide attempts – in June 2008 and June 2009 – “as result of the effects of the extreme sexual abuse that had been perpetrated on him,” the lawsuit contends.