

## Diocese Land to Fund Accord

### Connecticut Post

By **DANIEL TEPFER**

**October 17, 2003** - BRIDGEPORT - The sale of millions of dollars of church-owned property will fund most of the \$21 million the Roman Catholic Diocese of Bridgeport will pay to 40 people abused by priests.

Bishop William E. Lori said Thursday that 60 percent of the settlement will be funded through the sale of "undeveloped surplus property" owned by the diocese. The bishop, speaking at a press conference at the Catholic Center, refused to be specific about the number of properties or their location.

"It is still under negotiation and is not appropriate to talk about," he said.

Lori said the remaining 40 percent of the settlement will be covered by insurance.

Attorney Jason Tremont, who, along with Cindy Robinson, represents the 40 abuse victims, said the diocese is to make an initial payment of \$5 million by the end of the year, followed by four more payments of \$4 million during the next year.

On Wednesday, after a year of negotiations before U.S. Federal Magistrate William I. Garfinkel, the diocese agreed to pay 40 people who claimed to have been abused by 16 diocesan priests in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of the victims have not been publicly identified.

Two years ago the diocese paid \$15 million to settle claims by 26 people who said they had been abused by priests.

Diocesan officials said this week's settlement brings the total of payments to \$37.7 million paid to settle 89 claims since 1953, when the diocese was established. Of the prior settlements, 35 percent was funded through diocesan land sales.

While the diocese had previously acknowledged abuse claims against 15 of its priests, it revealed for the first time Thursday that another priest, the Rev. Henry A. Albeke, had been suspended in August 2002 after a man reported he had been abused by the priest in 1978 at St. Jude Church in Monroe.

Lori opened the press conference by apologizing to the victims of abuse.

"Let me express my personal remorse and the remorse of the entire diocese for the harm that was caused in the lives of so many individuals," he said. "With all my heart I apologize and ask for forgiveness."

However, Lori sidestepped questions about New York Cardinal Edward Egan's role in the sex-abuse scandal.

Court documents show Egan, who was bishop of the Bridgeport Diocese from 1988 to 2000, reassigned priests accused of abuse to different posts around the diocese without disciplining them.

"I know the cardinal feels deeply about this," Lori said, adding that Egan handled the situation "differently."

Lori said two of the 16 priests accused of abuse have been laicized or removed from the priesthood while three have died, 10 are no longer active but still receive funding from the diocese, and one, Monsignor Martin P. Ryan, remains active.

In November 2002, a woman who previously lived in Trumbull told diocesan officials she was abused by Ryan at St. Theresa parish in Trumbull in the mid-1970s when she was 17.

Lori said the diocese's sexual misconduct board twice examined the allegations against Ryan and determined he is not a danger to children and is fit to remain in the ministry. The bishop said he continues to stand behind Ryan, but included the abuse case against him in the settlement "in an attempt to gain closure."

Ryan is currently pastor of St. Edward the Confessor parish in New Fairfield.

"We stand behind all the claims of all our clients and, at the very least, all these priests need to be suspended," Robinson said.

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