

For Immediate Release:
8/7/04

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Roman Catholic Diocese of Portland
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Pastor Removed Pending Investigation

Based on a preliminary investigation, Fr. Paul Coughlin is being temporarily removed as pastor of Holy Cross and St. John the Evangelist Parishes, South Portland. This action is taken based on Fr. Coughlin's association with John Skinner, Sr., of Stonington. Skinner has recently been indicted for sexually assaulting a teenager between 1990—1994. During this time Skinner served as a youth ministry volunteer at St. Mary of Lourdes in Lincoln. The Diocese has launched an investigation of claims that, in the course of his acquaintance with Skinner, Fr. Coughlin placed a minor at risk. In addition, Fr. Coughlin is alleged to have allowed Skinner to live with him for a period of time at St. John's rectory in South Portland. These allegations do not involve sexual abuse claims against Fr. Coughlin and his removal is an administrative action in order to facilitate further investigation of whether the accusations are true.

In light of these allegations and the preliminary investigation, Bishop Richard J. Malone, is also re-examining an earlier complaint which did allege sexual misconduct with a minor by Fr. Coughlin in 1985. Public authorities brought these claims to the attention of the Diocese in 2002; the Diocese cooperated in their investigation and conducted an investigation of its own. The results were presented to the independent Diocesan Review Board, and at that time, the claims could not be substantiated. No civil charges were filed.

During the investigation, Fr. Coughlin will have no priestly ministry and is prohibited from any unsupervised contact with minors. In the interim, Msgr. Michael J. Henchal will serve as temporary administrator for the two parishes while remaining pastor of St. Bartholomew Parish, Cape Elizabeth. St. John and Holy Cross parishioners are being informed of the decision during Masses this weekend. The 69 year old priest has served as pastor in South Portland since July of 1996.

As has been our practice, the Diocese encourages any victim of sexual abuse by clergy or church representative to make a report to law enforcement, and contact our Support and Assistance Ministry for counseling referrals and assistance at 1-866-829-4437.

Also anyone who has relevant information regarding Fr. Coughlin should contact Deacon John Brennan, Diocesan Investigator at 773-6471 ext. 143.

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***Additional information:** Fr. Coughlin is originally from Woburn, Massachusetts. He studied at Maryknoll College, Illinois and Maryknoll Seminary, New York. He was ordained in 1966 and has served as faculty and staff at Maryknoll Junior Seminary in California. His first assignment in Maine was at St. Athanasius and St. John, Rumford in*

1970. He also served as Chaplain at Mt. Merici Convent and School, Waterville and Colby College (1971), St. Theresa Parish, Oakland (1973), St. Mary Parish, Augusta (1974), St. Mary Parish, Bangor (1978), and St. Mary Parish, Wells (1987).)

Note to media: Cameras are not allowed in church or on church property. Reporters may attend Mass, however approaching or interviewing parishioners is NOT allowed in the church or on church property.

Sue Bernard will be available to answer questions for the media on Sunday at 11:30 in the parking lot at Holy Cross Parish, located near the corner between North Richland and Cottage Roads, South Portland.