

Rockford Register Star

Estimated printed pages: 2

August 23, 2002

Section: Life Style

Page: 5D

Diocese still supports Clapsaddle

Edith C Webster

Staff

RRS=Metro

Bishop Thomas Doran has said the Rev. Harlan Clapsaddle will never again serve as a priest in the Rockford Diocese, but Clapsaddle continues to be supported by the diocese.

Clapsaddle is the priest relieved of parish duties at a Dixon church in 1997 after three brothers accused him of sexually abusing them as children.

He now lives in Florida with friends, but the Rockford Diocese pays his living expenses.

"The bishop is obliged to ensure the support of all the priests," said Rev. Msgr. Kagan. "Until Rome does something different, the bishop has ultimate responsibility for him."

When U.S. bishops met in June to hammer out a national policy for responding to sexual abuse among priests, there was quite a bit of debate over what to do with elderly or sick priests accused long ago of committing abuse.

Victims advocates have pushed to have all abusers defrocked, but canon law does not allow bishops to take such immediate action.

The bishops are awaiting word from the Vatican that could allow them to more easily remove abusive priests.

After Clapsaddle was removed from the Dixon church, he received treatment.

He then moved to Cor Mariae Center nursing home, where he was given permission to say Mass and minister to the sick.

When the brothers went public this spring with their abuse allegations, Clapsaddle left the nursing home.

Doran confirmed that another allegation against Clapsaddle surfaced just weeks before the public accusations were made, but this accuser wanted to remain anonymous.

Clapsaddle is still being monitored, Kagan said, by the Rev. Msgr. Eric Barr, Episcopal Vicar for Clergy and Religious and an adviser to Rockford's sexual misconduct committee.

Barr regularly checks in on Clapsaddle via phone calls.

- By Edith C. Webster, Rockford Register Star.

Harlan Clapsaddle (mug)