

Woman claims priest molested her as a child

MODESTO (MNS) — A woman who claims she was molested by the Rev. Oliver O'Grady, a Catholic priest convicted of molesting boys, has filed a lawsuit against the Roman Catholic Diocese of Stockton.

The lawsuit, filed Wednesday in San Joaquin County Superior Court, alleges the diocese failed to stop O'Grady when it had knowledge of his misconduct.

In November, O'Grady was sentenced to 14 years in state prison after he pleaded guilty to four counts of molesting two young boys.

The 28-year-old woman, identified in the lawsuit as Ann Doe,

said she was molested by O'Grady from 1973 to 1978, while she was 7 to 12 years old, when the priest was a visitor in her home. O'Grady was pastor of St. Anne's parish in Lodi at the time.

In 1976, the lawsuit alleges, the mother of another young girl complained about O'Grady to the Diocese, which paid for that girl's counseling and ordered the priest to write a letter of apology to the mother.

The suit also claims that after O'Grady admitted his guilt, the Diocese continued to leave the priest in parish posts where he could be in close contact with

children.

The woman, in seeking unspecified damages, claims a life-long loss of self-esteem, depression and suicidal tendencies. The woman came forward because her sense of betrayal had become overwhelming after the priest's misconduct became more public, according to her Sacramento attorney, Joseph C. George.

"Basically, these were secrets kept by kids for 20 years," George said.

Monsignor James E. Cain of the Stockton Diocese said diocesan officials had not seen the lawsuit and had no comment.

O'Grady, a native of Ireland,

came to St. Anne's Parish in 1971 and later was transferred to parishes in Stockton, Turlock, San Andreas and Hughson.

According to authorities, the offenses for which O'Grady was convicted occurred between 1984, when he became pastor at St. Andrew's Catholic Church in San Andreas, and 1991.

He resigned in June 1993 as pastor of the Hughson church, issuing a statement in the church bulletin that he was leaving because of allegations of sexual misconduct. He initially was held on 23 counts of lewd and lascivious behavior with minors and could have faced a prison sentence of up to 172 years.