

Metro

THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER, SATURDAY, OCT. 22, 1994

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3rd molestation complaint against priest

COURTS: Ex-altar boy says the Rev. Eleuterio Ramos abused him. Two others have made similar complaints.

By BONNIE WESTON
The Orange County Register

A Riverside warehouse clerk has become the third man to claim that he was sexually molested as a youngster by a priest

permitted to work with children, despite repeated complaints lodged with his Orange County superiors, according to interviews and court records.

The complaint, which an attorney says he filed with the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange, is the latest molestation allegation against local clergymen. Also pending are a lawsuit against Monsignor Michael Harris and one involving the Rev. Richard T. Coughlin, former leader of the All-American Boys' Chorus. An-

other case involving Coughlin was settled this week.

The new complaint against the Rev. Eleuterio Ramos alleges that senior clergymen shirked their moral and legal duty to protect the one-time altar boy, and failed to take action when his parents brought the abuse allegations to their attention in the late 1970s.

As a matter of policy, The Orange County Register does not identify alleged victims of sexual abuse without their consent.

The man's attorney said Friday that the diocese's response — then and now — is typical of its failure to confront and resolve similar molestation allegations and complaints against the priest in the 1970s and 1980s.

"His father went to the diocese and they did nothing," said Werner R. Meissner, the San Pedro attorney who has filed three complaints against Ramos. "They never tried to help the boy. They never cared about him. They don't care about him

now. They just want him to go away."

Monsignor Lawrence Baird, spokesman for the Diocese of Orange, was out of town Thursday and Friday. Two attorneys who have represented the diocese in these cases did not return calls Friday.

In the two previous complaints, two former altar boys

Please see PRIEST Page 7

► RALLY: Monsignor's supporters gather. Page 7

PEACEFUL PROTEST MARCH



H. LORREN AU JR./The Orange County Register

Teen-ager arrested in slaying

CRIME: Earl Rhoney is to be charged with murder in the death of Patricia Lea Pratt, 46.

By TERESA PUENTE
The Orange County Register

IRVINE — A teen-ager was arrested Friday in the slaying of a Turtle Rock woman during an apparent burglary attempt in January.

Earl Rhoney, 18, a former Irvine resident, will be charged with murder in the death of Patricia Lea Pratt, 46, who lived in a quiet cul-du-sac on Wildflower, police said. Rhoney, who also faces burglary charges, was arrested after his release from Orange County Juvenile Hall, where he was confined on a burglary charge.

"This is wonderful," said Pratt's aunt, Jo Ribnick, 74, upon hearing the news. "I hope this works out. ... I'm sure it will be good news for my sister."

Pratt's mother, Bea Kell, is

Students rally for monsignor in molestation case

EDUCATION: Students say their school isn't the same without the popular principal.

By MARLA JO FISHER

The Orange County Register

RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA — A crop-duster flew overhead trailing a banner that proclaimed, "We love Msgr. Harris."

Below, about 200 people echoed the sentiment, rallying on the banks of Lake Santa Margarita in support of the founding principal of Santa Margarita High School.

Monsignor Michael Harris, one of Orange County's best-known priests, resigned from the school abruptly in January after being accused of molesting a former student at Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana in 1979. Another former student sued last month, also alleging that he was molest-

ed between 1979-83.

On Friday, students attending the rally said their school is a changed place without its outgoing and popular leader, and vied with each other to tell stories about his warmhearted nature.

"He was everybody's best friend," said Kelley Box, 16. "He touched everybody's hearts. He was our school."

Dozens of parents agreed.

"He built the school. Without him, there wouldn't be a school," said Cary Hall, 45, of Laguna Ni-

guel, who doesn't believe the allegations.

David A. Price, who sued Harris last month, said he "would have been rallying for him, too," 16 years ago. "They don't have the knowledge of him I have," Price said. "If there are other victims out there, what message are they sending to them with their flags waving? That, if you are molested, you better not tell, because you won't be believed?"

The mother of another man

who said he was molested as a youth by Harris was unhappy about the rally.

"That really makes me sad they don't believe what happened, because it's probably happened to some of their children," said Leonora Colice of Stanton, whose late son attended Mater Dei.

*Register staff writer Carol McGraw contributed to this report.

PRIEST

FROM 1979-83

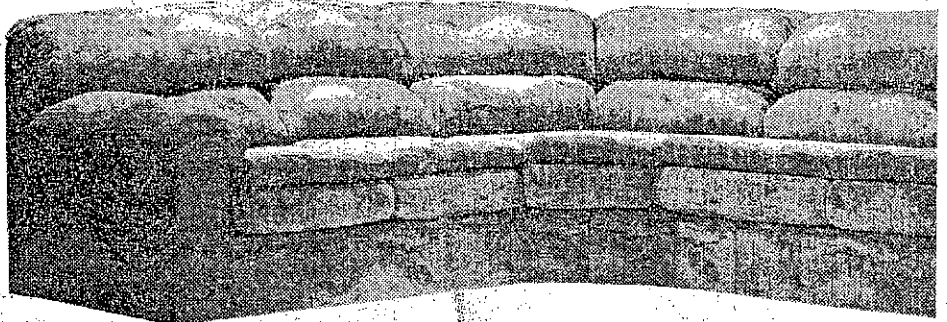
claimed that in the late 1970s and the 1980s Ramos performed oral sex on them, gave them alcohol, showed them pornographic magazines and took nude photographs of them.

The diocese has never publicly acknowledged that either boy was abused. Settlements in both cases were sealed by the court, at the request of the diocese.

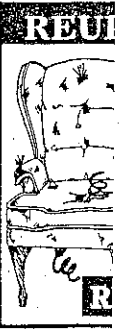
Ramos was reassigned to Tijuana in 1985. In 1990, he admitted that he sexually abused one of the boys, but it was after the young man turned 18. In a letter that year to the boy, the priest allegedly blamed "the molestation" on his abuse of alcohol and his own history as an abused child.

One lawsuit involving Coughlin has been settled, although a second claim is pending along with two other lawsuits against the diocese or its priests. The most prominent involves a lawsuit filed in September, accusing the popular Monsignor Michael Harris of sexually molesting a Mater Dei High School student from

This Is One Cushy Sale



\$499⁹⁷



Dei High School student from 1979 to 1983.

Meissner said the latest Ramos allegation was sparked when his new client saw a news article about a settlement in the molestation case of another former altar boy, James Rogan. Rogan has consented to the publication of his name.

Rogan's claim stated he was molested over a period of 11 years and Friday he said that the emotional scars have changed his view of the church.

"The church has never done anything without being forced," Rogan said Friday. "Things haven't changed. I won't step foot in a Catholic church."

Unlike Rogan, who was molested repeatedly, Meissner said his new client is presently able to recall only a single molestation incident in 1978 when he was 13 years old.

According to Meissner, when the priest performed a wedding in Santa Ana, the altar boy helped with the service. Afterward, Meissner said, the priest gave the boy alcohol and invited him to spend the night at the rectory where the priest allegedly molested the child.

The boy told his parents the next day, and they complained to the diocese. Ramos was transferred to another Orange County parish not long after, Meissner said.

Meissner said Rogan's tale prompted his new client to connect his abuse as a child with problems he is experiencing as an adult forging and maintaining relationships with other people.

In court records, a priest, church schoolteacher and librarian related other troubling episodes regarding Ramos' conduct with children.

All three claim they and others took their concerns directly to Auxiliary Bishop Michael Driscoll.

In a deposition from a 1991 case filed by a Tustin man, Driscoll said he did not recall hearing any complaints firsthand. He said he did know "secondhand" of complaints about Ramos, but only involving alcohol.

His account is contradicted by the Rev. Robert Tressler. The Orange County priest said that in 1982 a teen-age boy confided that he had been sexually molested by Ramos.

Tressler said that both he and the boy spoke with Driscoll. He said Driscoll told the boy to keep their conversation "to himself" and promised the priest he would take care of it.



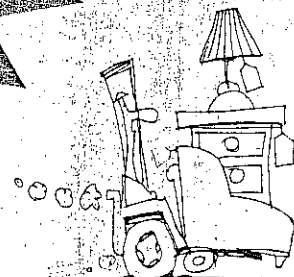
Reclining Side-By-Side Catnap

Wickes All-Up

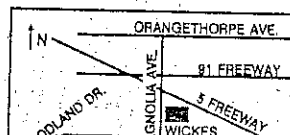
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really don't think that would have been said," Rice said "enormous effort" initially was put into an inquiry. He added that
Please see **TOXINS, B-4**

Suit says priest molested boy from 1974-85

By Ernest E. Pund
The Press-Enterprise

RIVERSIDE

A Riverside man is the second adult to claim in a lawsuit that he was molested as an altar boy by a Roman Catholic priest years ago in Orange County.

In both cases, the plaintiffs recalled the alleged molestation only after attending counseling for emotional problems, their attorney, Werner R. Meissner, said.

The church settled with one of the plaintiffs, an Irvine man, in 1992, court documents show. Meissner declined to comment on the settlement, which was sealed as agreed to by the parties.

James Rogan, 29, of Riverside filed his lawsuit last week against the Rev. Eleuterio Ramos and other church officials, claiming that Ramos sexually abused him from 1974 through 1985.

Rogan, who is married and has two children, had buried the memory of the molestation, court documents filed in Orange County Superior Court state. It was

Please see **PRIEST, B-4**

MORE LOCAL

Catalyst for change: Jane Block of Riverside is known for turning ideas into reality. Children, land and animals top the list for the volunteer political activist. Working on a project is like playing chess, she says. **Living, D-1**

Throwing rags on to the wind, hundreds of teen-agers who would usually settle for nothing less than a good set of Ray Bans snapped up "eclipse shades" at \$2 apiece. They saw something not to be repeated until some of them have their own teen-age children.

"I will remember it, and I hope I see the next one," said Miranda Lagac, an eighth-grader who will be thirtysomething by the next time the moon and the sun align to produce a near-total solar eclipse over Southern California.

The early-morning cloud cover parted yesterday at 8:45 a.m., exactly the time students were scheduled to be let out of class to watch, said science teacher Bob Nyman. He sported a T-shirt imprinted with a huge picture of the sun — "Our Closest Star."

"It cleared up at exactly the right time," Nyman said. "I was afraid we'd have to give refunds on the glasses."

The science club sold about 500 eclipse shades — which allow viewers to watch the eclipse without harming their eyes — and the proceeds will help them defray costs of field trips.

Nyman set up two telescopes, binoculars and a video viewing screen for students to watch the eclipse up close but safely. The moon moved right to left until it covered about 80 percent of the sun's face at the height of the eclipse around 9 a.m. It was all over in the next 90 minutes.

In some areas of the country, about 94 percent of the sun would be covered, leaving a spectacular ring of sun showing around the moon.

A similar eclipse visible from Southern California in 1991 covered 60 percent of the sun. Viewers in Baja California saw a

The solar eclipse, w
total eclipse.

The next eclipse will be will be in the year 2019
Elsinore Middle School last fall, said science tea

"This is a chance to get about," he said. "A lot of I talked about last fall."

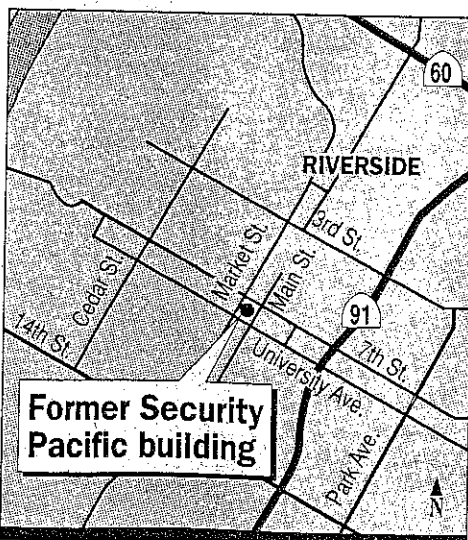
Eighth-grader Randi M. parts.

"It's bright," she said. "I Jerry Henriquez, also in last eclipse in 1991 shir cardboard.

"This is really cool," he s Eighth-grader Joe Roda e purchased from the G. eclipse.

"We were in Baja," he se

Riverside, and the state,



The Press-Enterprise

► Nine government offices will lease space at the 11-story downtown building purchased by the city's Redevelopment Agency in its biggest real estate transaction ever.

By Juan C. Arancibia
The Press-Enterprise

The city's purchase of the former Security Pacific Bank building was given final approval yesterday by City Council, which also ratified an agreement to lease most of the space to state

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arket night was designed similar pitfalls. It featured od, produce and acoustic ment and lacked craft which had been popular in The market was limited to treet between Fifth and eets, instead of extending iversity Avenue as it had

uch as \$4 million in re-cash reserves, were not d, said Ralph Megna, a evelopment official who brokered the agreement. In however, a higher dollar ill not affect the project ecause the state's lease is will be based on what has to have to repay the

ity will save money by the personnel, parks and artment offices — which sed in different locations ity Hall — because rents wer will be lower, Megna

isaid the California Tower is the largest real estate on ever done by the Redent Agency and it becomes icy's largest asset.

gency will take over the evel and hopes to attract d a restaurant to stimulate along the Main Street me existing tenants, in- the Western Riverside of Governments and a gency, will remain at the

plans for a small movie on the ground floor are of the picture, Megna said.

PRIEST

Continued from B-1

not until he underwent counseling, after reading a report of the earlier settlement, that he recalled having been molested by Ramos, Meissner said.

Meissner described his client as an intelligent man from a close, Catholic family, who because of the molestation is suffering from depression and anxiety that in turn could cost him his job as a fast-food restaurant manager. Rogan is also having marital problems now, Meissner said.

Church officials had reason to believe that Ramos was molesting Rogan, then a student, altar boy or

house boy in the rectory, and yet they failed to protect Rogan and other children from harm, according to the lawsuit.

On more than one occasion, church officials "were specifically informed" of Ramos' conduct by a teacher at the Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Orange County, the suit reads.

The Irvine man claimed in his suit that he was abused by Ramos from 1974 through 1981.

According to other court records, Ramos began molesting Rogan when the boy was 10. Ramos gave him alcohol, performed various sex acts on him, including oral copulation and disrobing. He also took pictures of him in the nude.

Ramos resigned his position with the Diocese of Orange in 1985 and was reassigned to Tijuana. He could not be reached to comment. He said in court documents that he had been barred from ministry work in the United States.

Officials at the Diocese of Orange could not be reached to comment. The Rev. Gregory Coiro, spokesman for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, which included Orange County until 1976, declined to comment because litigation was pending, he said.

Meissner is asking for an unspecified amount of compensation for damages to Rogan.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.



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JUBILATION: African National Congress supporters cheer Nelson Mandela in Cape Town.

from prison on Feb. 11, 1990.
Maintaining a tone of reconcili-
ation, Mandela offered an olive

Lawsuit settled over Segerstrom d

LAWSUIT: Theodore Segerstrom's insurance company will purchase a \$250,000 annuity over the fatality of his daughter, then 7.

By **KIM CHRISTENSEN**
The Orange County Register

SANTA ANA — A scion of one

of Orange County's most prominent families has reached a partial settlement with his ex-wife, who sued him for negligence this year after their daughter was killed in a 1993 farming accident.

Theodore Segerstrom, whose family of farmers-turned-developers built South Coast Plaza, was operating the tractor that pulled a bean thrasher on which his daughter Corinne, 7, was riding when she fell and was

crushed under its wheels.

Another daughter, Rayell, now 10, was with her father on the tractor when the Aug. 31 accident occurred. She has experienced emotional distress and mental suffering, according to the lawsuit filed in January by her mother, Euna Denee Segerstrom.

Theodore Segerstrom's insurance company agreed to purchase an annuity that will pay

Rayell a total of \$2 installments, beginning on her 18th birthday.

The settlement, \$173,040 to purchase a bearing annuity and legal fees, does not include damages claimed by Segerstrom. The rest is pending.

Neither Theodore nor his lawyer, No

2nd O.C. man alleges abuse by priest

COURTS: Lawsuit follows earlier litigation, in which clergyman admitted molestation.

By **BRYON MacWILLIAMS**
The Orange County Register

A Roman Catholic priest who in 1990 acknowledged he had sexually abused an altar boy in Orange County has been sued by a second man who charges that

he was molested while an altar boy for the clergyman.

In papers filed last week in Orange County Superior Court, James Rogan, 28, of Riverside further asserts that officials from the Diocese of Orange and Archdiocese of Los Angeles were aware of the molestation but allowed it to persist for 11 years.

Rogan — an altar boy, houseboy and student from 1974 through 1985 — alleges that the Rev. Eleuterio Ramos plied him

with alcohol before performing oral sex on him and taking photographs of him in the nude.

In a statement accompanying the lawsuit, a clinical psychologist says Rogan repressed all memory of the abuse until May 1993.

During that month, a published account told of a settlement reached between the Diocese of Orange and a Tustin man, then 27, who charged that Ramos had

Please see **PRIEST** Page 2



VIDMAR:
We're raising
sedentary kids,
gymnast says.

unique performance
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IG AFRICA: The an-
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VER: A teacher's near-
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ARTY: An elegant
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the PSO/**ACCENT 1**

ASH: In a clever new
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craft pieces/**ACCENT 3**

Tracy, Gasoline Alley,
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Vol. 89 No. 130

FROM PAGE 1

PRIEST: Lawsuit alleges 11 years of abuse

FROM 1

molested him for seven years, beginning when he was 10.

Although terms of the settlement were sealed by a judge at the request of the diocese, the news account triggered flashbacks of the abuse for Rogan, said his attorney, Werner R. Meissner.

In court depositions, Ramos admitted having sex with the Tustin man and taking nude photographs of him, but only after the man had reached the age of 18.

In a corresponding letter submitted with court documents in the 1991 lawsuit, Ramos acknowledged that he molested the man as a youth, along with unnamed boys of unspecified ages.

Ramos, now working for the Tijuana Diocese, could not be reached for comment Monday.

A U.S. citizen, Ramos resigned his position with the Diocese of Orange in 1985 and was reassigned to the bishop of Tijuana. In a letter written by Ramos, included in court documents, he said he had been forbidden from ministering again in the United States.

Court documents show that, in 1990, he counseled parishioners who had problems with alcohol, sexual, mental and emotional abuse. He also spoke frequently at local Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon meetings, documents show.

In 1979 he was an in-patient at a Massachusetts hospital that specializes in the treatment of alcohol dependency.

Although attorneys for the diocese have repeatedly denied that the molestation occurred, Ramos wrote the following in an undated letter to the Tustin man:

"Why the molestation? At best I can presently understand, it is a complication of mental, emotional and physical problems and illnesses all complicated by alcoholism. Were you the only one violated? No."

In the same letter, Ramos said he was no longer involved with any children.

"This is the first I've heard of the (second) lawsuit. ... I can't make a statement until I have

information of substance," said Monsignor Lawrence J. Baird of the Orange Diocese.

Father Gregory Coiro of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles — from which the Orange Diocese was separated in 1976, two years after the alleged abuse began — also said he was unaware of the second suit.

"We just can't comment on something that's in litigation," he said.

The names of the defendants in the current suit became public late Friday after Orange County Municipal Court Judge Floyd H.

and St. Anthony Claret Church, Anaheim.

Meissner said a settlement conference has been scheduled for May 23 to discuss a possible resolution of the suit.

Although the court papers do not specify the amount of compensatory or punitive damages being sought, Meissner said Monday that the monetary threshold should be "a million dollars."

He added that Rogan, who is married and has two children, is a former manager of a fast-food restaurant and receiving disabili-

**Ramos cannot be charged
criminally because the statute of
limitations has expired. However, state
law extends the period for filing suit
from the moment a repressed memory
surfaces.**

Schenk signed an order rescinding their "unnamed" status.

Meissner said California civil statutes forbade him from initially naming the defendants in the May 3 suit because the statute of limitations had expired and the plaintiff, Rogan, had become an adult.

Ramos cannot be charged criminally because the statute of limitations has expired. However, state law extends the period for filing suit from the moment a repressed memory surfaces.

In addition to Ramos, also named as defendants are the Roman Catholic bishop of Orange and the Roman Catholic archbishop of Los Angeles.

Auxiliary Bishop Michael P. Driscoll of the Orange Diocese also was named because he has allegedly covered up the molestation since 1979, according to the suit.

The places where the abuse purportedly occurred were: St. Joseph Catholic Church, Placentia; Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Santa Ana; St. Angela Mercy Church, Brea; Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, La Habra;

ity payments because of psychological disorders stemming from the abuse.

In a statement, clinical psychologist Michele Ann Linden said Rogan has post-traumatic stress disorder, major depression, sexual dysfunction, alcohol abuse and interpersonal problems.

Although he is receiving treatment, Rogan does not have enough money to pay for therapy, the suit says.

"Because Ramos is the guy who introduced (Rogan) to alcohol at an age of 10 years old," Meissner said, "any kind of drug or alcohol problem he has is a result of that."

CORRECTIONS

As a matter of policy, The Orange County Register promptly corrects all errors of substance. If you wish to report an error or clarification of a news story, call the ombudsman at (714) 953-2204.

Orange County

Los Angeles Times

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ALEXANDER GARCIA / Los Angeles Times

Two girls console one another outside memorial service for Jasmin Cook held at Silverado Community Church.

MEMORIAL, B5

Church Faces Dilemma Over Sex Allegations

■ **Rights:** Should future employers know about cases that have been settled? Are priests not charged with crimes entitled to privacy?

By TRACY WEBER
TIMES STAFF WRITER

When James Rogan was a boy, Father Eleuterio Ramos was the parish priest he and his parents knelt before, took communion from, confessed to and prayed with at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church in Placentia. Rogan became an altar boy at age 10 and worked in the church rectory.

But every time Rogan, now 29, thinks of the parish priest of his childhood, his stomach knots and an anger boils inside. Father Ramos is also the priest Rogan says plied him with alcohol and adult movies and magazines, then molested him while he was drunk or asleep.

Last month, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange quietly settled the lawsuit Rogan brought against it for the alleged abuse, demanding the amount of the settlement be kept confidential.

In May, 1993, the diocese settled—and similarly sealed—another almost identical suit brought against Ramos, a

Please see **PRIESTS**, B7

ashion



PRIESTS

Continued from B1

priest in the diocese for 19 years. In a letter contained in the court file, Ramos admitted that he molested the Tustin man who brought the suit and other boys of unspecified ages.

Even though his sexual improprieties were known to church authorities, Ramos continued to work as a parish priest. He moved south to Mexico, where until six months ago he was the vicar at Divine Providence Church in Tijuana, with a special ministry to families and youths. The Diocese of Tijuana said Friday that it does not know of his current whereabouts.

"Of any priest that has been accused of this—why have they not taken his vows away?" Rogan asks angrily today. "What was the purpose of the settlement? Was it hush money?"

The Ramos case, and the flurry of recent settlements and suits involving priests who once worked in the Diocese of Orange, has raised questions about how the church handles the allegations. And, perhaps just as important, how it protects others if an accused priest leaves the diocese for another posting as a priest, or for a job outside the church.

"We've been struggling with it—what do we do?" said Father John Hardin, assistant to the head of the West Coast province of the Franciscan friars, which is separate from the Diocese of Orange. "You cannot not deal with it today. It's financial and political suicide."

In the past two months, the Diocese of Orange has settled lawsuits accusing three priests who formerly worked in the diocese of sexually molesting minors. Additional suits against two of those priests are pending, as is another claim against Ramos.

And last month, a former Mater Dei High School student sued Msgr. Michael Harris, the former principal who helped found Santa Margarita High School, accusing the priest of molesting him in his office at Mater Dei.

Officials at the Diocese of Orange—which has 118 diocesan priests and 68 from religious orders—would not comment on their procedures for alerting future employers once they have substantiated claims of sexual abuse against a priest. There are about 500,000 Catholics and 53 parishes in Orange County.

But in dioceses and religious orders across the country the issue has become a moral and legal hot potato, especially as more and more alleged

counted allegations of sexual abuse or quietly reassigned the priests to other parishes and dioceses, or moved them to other countries, frequently without alerting anyone to the complaints.

In the case of Ramos, San Pedro attorney Werner R. Meissner believes that the diocese shuttled the priest from parish to parish once allegations were made. In 1979, Ramos entered a chemical dependency program after a veteran teacher reported to diocesan officials the complaints of a mother who said the priest had shown her son dirty movies and behaved inappropriately. Despite the allegations, Ramos went on to serve as a pastor at three parishes in the diocese.

According to diocesan records obtained by Meissner, Ramos was at eight parishes from 1966 until he went on inactive leave and moved to Tijuana in 1985.

"We want it so that it's published to everyone, everywhere that this priest has been accused," said Meissner, who represented both men who settled suits with the diocese over Ramos. "He's been suspended.

There's been admissions and findings and they're true. This guy has molested children. . . . What if he goes off to somewhere small, some parish where they don't know and no one tells them?"

In April 1993, the 4th Circuit Court of Appeal in Santa Ana ruled that a diocese may be liable if it doesn't tell others. The court ruled that the mother of an abused boy could sue the Diocese of Orange for failing to warn parishioners about a priest it knew had previously been charged with abuse.

The appeals court reversed an Orange County Superior Court judge who found that "the diocese had no special relationship with, or duty toward, its parishioners," and was thus immune to damages.

Damning in the appeals court case was a February, 1985, letter written by then Msgr. Michael P. Driscoll to a monsignor in Plymouth, England, regarding the prior allegations. In the letter, Driscoll, who is now an auxiliary bishop, attempted to obtain employment in England for a priest he had under-

gone psychiatric treatment for performing a sex act on an 8-year-old boy.

Driscoll said the boy's mother "had made it impossible" for the priest to continue as a parish priest by demanding he no longer be able to work with children. "No arguments have succeeded in swaying her," Driscoll wrote. "She has threatened to go to the police. . . . [The priest] is in jeopardy of arrest and possible imprisonment if he remains here."

Please see PRIESTS, B8

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ORANGE COUNTY

PRIESTS

Continued from B7

The Diocese of Orange eventually settled—and, once again, sealed—cases with both the mother and her son.

Though the appellate court decision was not published as a precedent-setting case, which limits its value, attorneys who deal with such matters say it bolsters future suits where it can be proved that the church had previous knowledge of abuse.

"The decision reflects that there are situations where one can have a valid fraud case against the church if they have the information and yet hide their heads," said Thomas Hahn, the Newport Beach attorney who represented both the mother and her son.

For officials at the Archdiocese of Chicago, the quandary of what to reveal about their clergy came down to a moral decision. These days, if employers call them about priests who have had substantiated allegations of sexual abuse involving minors, they've decided to tell all.

"We think we might be liable if we tell them. We think we might be liable if we don't," said Carol Fowler, director of personnel services for the archdiocese. "We think we could get sued either way. Since you have to make a choice, we chose to take the risk for the protection of the children."

The archdiocese, which has 1,050 diocesan priests and 1,000 from religious orders, also tells other dioceses if any allegations have been made against a priest, even if they have not been proved.

Fowler said the archdiocese doesn't laud itself over its choice to tell. The current policies were decided upon after a spate of allegations became public around 1992.

"It's great in hindsight, you know?" Fowler said.

For the Franciscan Friars, the issue of what to do and what to say about priests who have been accused—in some cases confessed—of sexual abuse with minors, sits like an unwanted guest on their door-

step.

In November, 1993, after a year-long inquiry, the Franciscan order announced that 34 boys had been molested by 11 monks over a 23-year period at St. Anthony's Seminary in Santa Barbara. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Franciscans were praised for digging out every case of abuse.

But now that it's over, the order faces the task of how to handle the priests, especially if they have not been criminally charged.

"What responsibility do we have? Say this friar goes out and looks for work at a McDonald's and they call us," said Father Hardin, who is in charge of pastoral counseling for the victims in the St. Anthony's case. "This person has not been accused and [dragged] into court."

But Hardin said the bottom line remains keeping others safe, despite the potential legal ramifications of telling others of allegations against a priest.

"The friars also have civil rights, and that's where it gets tricky," he said. "We have a moral obligation to keep this from happening

again. . . . We don't want to be driven by attorneys and not by our values."

One former Franciscan, Gary Pacheco, was recently sued in separate suits by two men who alleged he molested them when they were boys. The Franciscans settled the suit with one of the men last week.

Hardin said if someone called him up about Pacheco tomorrow he'd be straight. "I'd tell them I wouldn't personally hire him."

But for Mary Staggs, founder of the Southern California chapter of the Survivors' Network for those Abused by Priests, this is all too little, too late—and she questions

whether the dioceses will rat on their fallen brothers.

"It's almost as if we're forced to file lawsuits to stop the abuse, to expose it," said Staggs, who settled a suit with the Diocese of Orange against an Anaheim priest in 1991.

Staggs said victims of abuse have started their own database to keep track of problem priests. The Survivors' Connection, operated by a Rhode Island couple, keeps track of allegations and puts alleged victims of the same priest in touch with one another, she said.

"People need to be aware there's a priest out there that has sexually abused children," she said.

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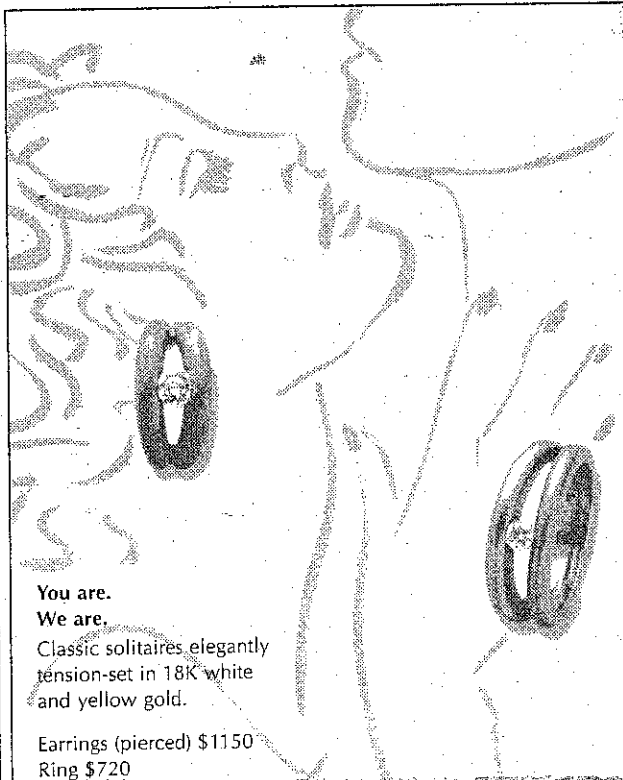
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POOCH

Continued from B6

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• Best animal wear: Snuggles

ORANGE COUNTY

Ex-Altar Boy's Suit Alleges Molestation by Priest

■ **Courts:** Riverside man says repressed memory surfaced after reading of Diocese of Orange settlement.

By LYNN FRANEY
TIMES STAFF WRITER

SANTA ANA — A second former altar boy has filed a lawsuit alleging sexual molestation two decades ago at the hands of a Catholic priest who admitted he had sexually abused an Orange County teen-ager.

James Rogan, 29, of Riverside alleged in a civil suit filed last week in Orange County Superior Court that Father Eluceterio Ramos made him drink liquor, had him pose in the nude and performed sexual acts on him beginning when he was about 10 years old.

Rogan claims in his lawsuit that he "repressed" the memories of the alleged sexual abuse until last May, when newspapers reported a settlement between a former altar boy at the Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Santa Ana and the Diocese of Orange.

The plaintiff in the earlier case, a 27-year-old man who lived in Tustin, had alleged in a 1991 lawsuit that Ramos made him pose in the nude, plied him with liquor, showed him X-rated movies and

then committed sex acts on him over a seven-year period beginning in 1974. Ramos admitted in court papers that he had molested the man when he was a teen-ager, and the Orange diocese agreed to an undisclosed settlement to end the lawsuit.

The new lawsuit names as defendants Ramos, the Diocese of Orange, the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and Auxiliary Bishop Michael P. Driscoll of the Orange Diocese. Rogan alleges that Driscoll and other church officials were told of Ramos' sexual improprieties yet did nothing.

The Diocese of Orange referred questions about Rogan's lawsuit to diocese spokesman Msgr. Lawrence Baird, who was en route to a vacation in Baja California. He did not return messages left at the vacation residence.

Father Gregory Coiro, a spokesman for the Los Angeles diocese, said: "We do not generally comment on matters in litigation. Our attorneys will address the matter in court." Rogan is suing the Los Angeles archdiocese as well as the Orange branch because the two groups divided their religious juris-

diction in 1976—two years after he alleges the molestations began.

The lawsuit does not set a monetary amount for damages being sought, but Rogan's attorney, Werner Meissner, who also represented the Tustin man, said his client is seeking "at least a million dollars."

A settlement conference between Meissner and the diocese's attorneys is set for May 23.

"Knowing the cast of characters I doubt that it will be settled then, but maybe I'll be surprised," Meissner said. "We'll see if they'll just play games and run us through the ringer again."

The statute of limitations on the case has expired, so his client will not press for criminal charges against Ramos, Meissner said. But a law passed several years ago stipulates that a civil suit can be filed up to three years after a repressed memory surfaces, he said.

Meissner said he will call a retired priest to testify that he once brought a boy before Driscoll to tell him about Ramos' sexual molestations of other boys.

Meissner said most of the molestations took place while Rogan, now married with two children, was an altar boy and student at St.

Joseph's Catholic Church in Placentia, beginning when he was about 10 years old.

The nature of the allegations mirrors many of the charges made against Ramos and the church in the 1991 lawsuit, filed by Ronald Glenane.

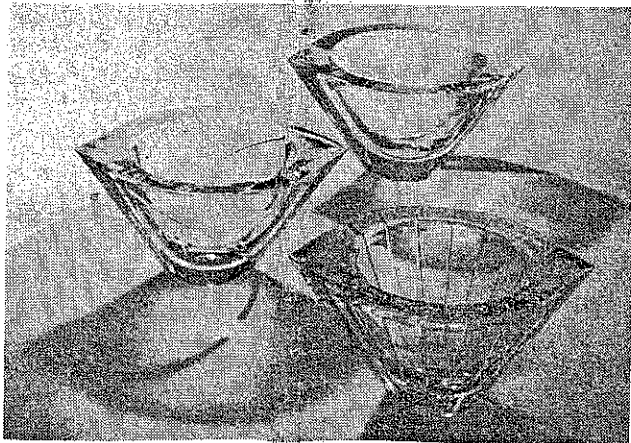
In an undated letter to Glenane filed in court as part of the lawsuit, Ramos admitted to molesting the plaintiff, saying the abuse was a "complication of mental, emotional and physical problems and illnesses all complicated by alcoholism." Ramos also said he himself was a victim of childhood sexual abuse and that Glenane was not the only boy he had molested.

In July, 1993, two months after reports of Glenane's settlement, Rogan told clinical psychologist Michele Linden that he believed he had been sexually abused as a child, according to a statement by Linden included in his lawsuit.

Ramos left the diocese temporarily in 1979 to enter a chemical dependency program in Massachusetts. A spokesman at the Tijuana Diocese's Seminary said Tuesday that Ramos is the vicar of Divine Providence Church in Tijuana. He could not be reached for comment.

Times Staff Writer Fernando Romero contributed to this report.

ELEGANCE



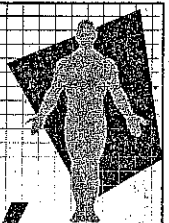
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7:30 pm

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7 pm

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