

# LOCAL NEWS

## Rev. Holley stays in prison New Mexico board denies parole for Worcester priest

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TELEGRAM & GAZETTE STAFF

**WORCESTER** — The Rev. David A. Holley, a priest of the Worcester Diocese serving a jail term in New Mexico after pleading guilty to sexually abusing and raping eight boys there, has been denied parole and will remain behind bars.

Ella Frank, executive director of New Mexico's parole board, said the three people who heard Rev. Holley's plea for release all voted to keep him in prison in Los Lunas, N.M., where he has served 11 years of a 55- to 275-year jail term.

The decision was not to be released until Monday, but the parole board decided instead to release its findings Thursday.

At a parole hearing Tuesday, three of Rev. Holley's New Mexico victims testified against releasing the priest. The national leadership of Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests and its former New England leader, Phil Saviano — an alleged victim of Rev. Holley in the Worcester Diocese — sent a letter to the parole board asking that he not be released.

Rev. Holley left Worcester in 1969 when he was sent to a treatment center operated by the Servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico; however, he was

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PHIL SAVIANO  
FORMER SNAP LEADER

not laicized and remains a priest of the Worcester Diocese.

While with the Servants of the Paraclete, allegations surfaced that he sexually abused boys in the Alamogordo, N.M., area. He pleaded guilty to abusing the boys in 1993 and was sent to prison.

A series of letters released by Mr. Saviano, obtained during his civil suit against the diocese, show that the diocese had continued contact with Rev. Holley at least until the early 1990s.

The letters show that the Worcester Diocese had serious misgivings about Rev. Holley as early as 1970, but later told the archdiocese of Denver that Rev. Holley was a priest in good standing with the Worcester Diocese.

The late Bishop Timothy J. Harrington told a psychiatrist on July 27, 1970, that "Bishop (Bernard J.) Flanagan and I

have had such serious doubts about Father (Rev. Holley) continuing in the priesthood that, at one time, it was suggested that he seek a dispensation and return to the lay state."

His last three parish assignments in the Worcester Diocese were what priests would consider "ideal," Bishop Harrington said. "In each place, Father's difficulty came to the fore and caused us to give him leave of absence."

Bishop Flanagan, in one letter, indicated that getting Rev. Holley involved with the Servants of the Paraclete in New Mexico or elsewhere would make it easier for Rev. Holley to receive approval to be a priest in another area of the country.

"I hope Holley's victims and their families feel some comfort knowing that he remains behind bars," said David Clohessy, national SNAP director. "I

know that innocent children are safer because of the parole board's wise and compassionate decision."

Rev. Holley, 77, almost did go free. The parole board voted on May 26 to release him. He was awaiting placement in an inpatient sex offender treatment program run by the state when word got out that victims had not been notified of the parole hearing, as required by New Mexico state law.

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson rescinded the parole last month, fired Robert Martinez, then the executive director of the parole board, and ordered a new hearing. The two parole board members who had voted to free Rev. Holley recused themselves, and three other members conducted the hearing Tuesday.

Mr. Saviano, who received a settlement from the Worcester Diocese several years ago after he alleged sexual abuse by Rev. Holley when he was assigned to St. Denis Church in East Douglas, said yesterday he was "greatly relieved" to hear Rev. Holley's parole was denied.

"What seems to have made the difference is that this panel was allowed to consider the victims' perspective, in addition to Holley's," he said.