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Local priest ousted

By SUSAN EVANS
THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

HOLLIDAYSBURG - A priest in Altoona-Johnstown Roman Catholic Diocese, who served in Geistown Borough a is identified in court documents as a pedophile, has left the priesthood.

Dennis E. Coleman, whose name surfaced in the 1994 sex-abuse trial of defrocked priest Francis Luddy, has been suspended for the past 16 years.

He requested and was recently granted, a release from the priesthood, said an announcement in March 22 edition of The Catholic Register, a newspaper published by the diocese.

News of Coleman's formal exit from the priesthood follows the diocese's revelation that it has entered into settlement talks in connection with 13 pending sex-abuse lawsuits.

It also comes on the heels of the disclosure that the Altoona-Johnstown diocese has spent \$3.26 million on ch sex-abuse cases involving 27 priests and 37 victims.

Coleman's lay status is described in this brief item in The Catholic Register: "Dennis E. Coleman dispensed from all obligations of the priesthood by the Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, in response to his own request, effective March 14, 2004. Coleman, as a former priest of the Diocese, has not been functioning for the past 16 years. T dispensation frees him to live as a non-ordained lay person of the Church."

Diocese officials offered no further comment on the case, except to say that the national policy to combat sex abuse in the church is being implemented.

"This is an ongoing process," said Sister Mary Parks, a diocese spokeswoman.

Coleman no longer is listed in the diocese directory and could not be reached for comment.

Coleman's name first surfaced in court records from the Luddy case, where in 1994 diocese attorneys identify him as one of at least 10 priests then implicated in sex abuse cases involving hundreds of young boys.

Public records from the Luddy trial described Coleman as a pedophile who, as a priest in Bellefonte, Center County, was hypnotizing boys and abusing them.

Then-Bishop James Hogan told Coleman to get some "rest and recreation," and transferred him to St. Benedic Church in Geistown, court records say.

Hogan later removed Coleman from church duties. After Hogan retired in 1981, his successor, Bishop Joseph Adamec, formally suspended Coleman.

The father of one of Coleman's victims was a state trooper, who threatened to shoot Coleman, records show, but criminal charges were not filed.

In a March 7, 2003, public statement on sex abuse by priests, Adamec described Coleman's status.

"Dennis Coleman had already been relieved of public ministry by Bishop Hogan when I became the Diocesan Bishop. Shortly after my arrival, I suspended Coleman, barring him from priestly ministry all together."

Most recently, Coleman's name surfaced in a spate of 13 sex-abuse lawsuits filed against the diocese.

Although Coleman is not listed as a plaintiff, victims' attorney Richard Serbin names Coleman and 14 others as priests having "a sexual interest in children" and being known to the diocese for that tendency.

The others named are Joseph Gaborek, William Kovach, Luddy, James Skupien, Thomas Carroll, Leonard Inma, Robert Kelly, Bernard Gratten, Francis McCaa, James Bunn, John Boyle, Martin McCamley, Joseph Bender and Harold Biller.

Many of those named have died or retired since accusations of sex abuse surfaced.

Serbin, who also was the attorney in the Luddy case, used the example of Coleman and the others to bolster his legal argument that the diocese had a practice of transferring known pedophiles, rather than removing them from access to children.

George St. York, Pa. 17405.

KROUSE Robert E

KROUSE Robert E., 61, Home, Pa., died Feb. 5, 2004. Friends received from 2 to 9 p.m. Sunday at the John Henderson Co. Funeral Home, 215 Central Ave., where service will be held at 11 a.m. Monday.

LUGAR Anne P. ³Anna

LUGAR Anne P. ³Anna, ² 92, Lorain Borough, died Feb. 6, 2004, at LaurelWood Convalescent Center. Born July 8, 1911, in Johnstown, daughter of Charles and Polona (Magdelinic) Shustrick. Preceded in death by parents; husband, George M.; and brothers, Charles and John Shustrick. Survived by sons, Lawrence W., married to the former Carolann (Huntzinger) Lugar, Johnstown, and James R., married to the former Loretta (Gies) Lugar, Annapolis, Md.; brothers, James Shustrick, Johnstown, and William Shustrick, Tire Hill; grandchildren, Christine Fyock, Lusby, Md.; Catherine Morgan, Dunkirk, Md.; George Lugar, Johnstown; Crystal Lugar, Johnstown; and James Lugar Jr., Annapolis, Md. Also survived by four great-grandchildren. A member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, SNPJ Lodge 289 and CFU Lodge 716. Anne enjoyed cooking and baking. Friends received from 2 to 4 and 7 to 9 p.m. Monday at the John Henderson Co. Funeral Home, 215 Central Ave. Funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Tuesday at St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Msgr. Harold N. [Biller](#). Interment, Grandview Cemetery.

MURPHY Elizabeth ³Betty

MURPHY Elizabeth ³Betty ² 97, Johnstown, died Feb. 6, 2004. Born Feb. 21