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### Priest Gets 3 Years For Sex Abuse

February 06, 1993 | By Terry Wilson.



A Roman Catholic priest who was convicted of aggravated criminal sexual abuse for fondling a 13-year-old girl in a church rectory was sentenced Friday to 3 years in prison, becoming the first priest in Cook County to be sentenced to prison.

Rev. Robert Mayer, 53, who had been the pastor at St. Odilo Church in Berwyn, sat impassively as people who had nearly filled the courtroom applauded the prison sentence imposed by Judge Thomas Durkin.

Moments before the sentence was announced, Mayer stood before Durkin.

"As God is my witness, I swear I was never alone with (the victim)," he said. "I am a broken man, and my life is broken. I can never be an employee of a church again."

"God is not your judge today," Durkin replied.

"I'm very happy," the victim said outside the courtroom. "I was in shock because I didn't think they would give him that long."

Although the sentencing was for an incident that occurred in January 1991, four men testified during the trial about an incident that had occurred nine years earlier.

The four, who were altar boys at St. Edna Church in Arlington Heights, had gone with Mayer on a water-skiing outing at Fox Lake. The men were 13 and 14 then, and Mayer had been associate pastor at St. Edna.

Two of the men testified for prosecutors Mark Cavins and Rosanne Pulia that they had watched Mayer

water-ski naked with bikini-type briefs around his ankles, and one testified that Mayer swam up to him while naked and tried to pull his swim trunks down while he was treading water, frightening him.

Mayer's attorney, Patrick Tuite, had characterized the trunks-pulling incident as "horseplay" and called the two others to testify. They said they had not seen the nude water-skiing.

But three of the four testified that Mayer had been nude in their presence, and Mayer himself admitted he had dived into the water naked after one of the boys because they had splashed him while he was changing clothes.

During the trial, testimony revealed that Mayer, who had been under an archdiocesan mandate not to be alone with anyone under age 21, had told a group of altar boys he wanted to have sex with the 13-year-old girl because he found her attractive.

He told a classroom of boys she should be brought to act as a demonstrative aid for a sex education lecture he gave, according to testimony.

The molesting occurred in a rectory.

"The evidence indicates a long history of sexually inappropriate conduct with children and adults," Cavins said during the sentencing hearing. "This crime was not committed on impulse or spur of the moment. The evidence shows it was planned and premeditated."

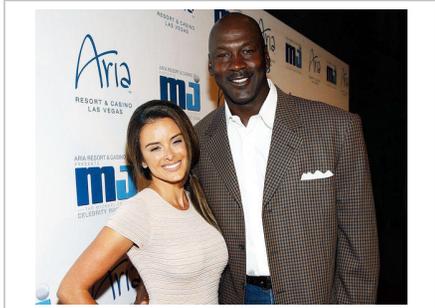
Tuite countered that Mayer's crime was not grave by comparison to others and asked that he not be treated more harshly because he is a priest. He asked for probation and argued it was "one incident, 10 or 15 seconds in a 53-year-old man's life."

Mayer has been allowed to remain free until Feb. 19 because Durkin said he believed additional measures would have to be taken by Cook County correctional officers to protect Mayer in jail before he is sent to prison.

Tuite said he will seek an appeal bond that would allow Mayer to remain free pending an appeal.

Mayer is no longer allowed to perform priestly duties, said a spokeswoman for the Chicago archdiocese.

His case will be examined to determine if he should remain a priest, the spokeswoman said.



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