

California priest resigns after abuse allegations ✓

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SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. — A Roman Catholic priest has resigned from a California diocese after a newspaper report that he was convicted of fondling three boys in Indianapolis during the early 1990s.

The Rev. Ponciano Ramos, 55, resigned Saturday from St. Mary of the Valley in Yucca Valley.

Ramos pleaded guilty to battery and received an 18-month suspended sentence, the Chicago Tribune reported Sunday. He originally had been charged with child molestation.

Ramos was director of St. Rita Catholic School in Indianapolis in 1992 when prosecutors said he touched at least three boys' genitals during one-on-one meetings.

Ramos had been parish administrator at St. Mary of the Valley in the San Bernardino Diocese since 1998.

"We've had no problem at all" with Ramos, said the Rev. Howard Lincoln, a diocesan spokesman. "He's a very popular priest."

Ramos' order, the Society of the Divine Word, had sent the diocese a 1994 letter testifying "they heartily endorsed and recommended" the priest, Lincoln said.

The letter didn't provide any details of Ramos' arrest or the original charges against him, Lincoln said.

Meanwhile, The Boston Globe reported Sunday that another priest in the San Bernardino Diocese had been transferred from Boston in 1990 even though he had faced decades of sexual abuse complaints.

A lawsuit alleges the Rev. Paul R. Shanley, 71, repeatedly raped a boy during the 1980s when he was pastor of a church in Newton, Mass. The molestation allegedly started when the boy was 6 and continued until he was 11.

An attorney for Gregory Ford, now 24, said he planned to release details yesterday of church documents that he alleges show the Boston Archdiocese knew of his complaints.

Shanley joined the San Bernardino Diocese in 1990 after taking medical leave from Boston. He served at St. Anne Catholic Church.

Before he was accepted, Shanley had signed an affidavit declaring, under penalty of perjury, that he had no record of accusations or convictions of a sexual nature, Lincoln said.