

## Records show payment to priest accused of abuse

Associated Press

BRIDGEPORT, Conn. — As bishop of Bridgeport, Cardinal Edward M. Egan gave a priest accused of abuse thousands of dollars to settle bank debts and pay for a defense lawyer, court documents show.

The documents obtained by The Hartford Courant show the diocese resisted compensation for Gavin O'Connor's alleged victim, but paid the priest as much as \$17,000 in 1989.

At the time, O'Connor had been accused of molesting boys for years.

The payment was condemned by the plaintiff's attorney in court as a payoff intended to buy O'Connor's silence in the case pending against him and the diocese, the paper reported. The diocese denied that claim.

During a March 1998 pretrial hearing, a Hartford Superior Court judge decided to allow testimony about the payment during trial, but the diocese settled the case for an undisclosed sum the next day.

The court file was sealed and destroyed, but one surviving transcript of the hearing shows the diocese argued that church law required Egan to pay O'Connor's personal debts because he was "removing the man's ability to practice his professional calling."