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ABUSE-COUGHLIN

COUGHLIN Feb. 12, 1993 (380 words) XXXX
CHORUS FOUNDER RESIGNS AMID SEXUAL ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

Catholic News Service

ORANGE, Calif. (CNS) -- A priest who founded a well-known boys chorus resigned from the organization and had his priestly faculties revoked after former members of the chorus accused him of having molested them years ago.

Father Richard T. Coughlin, 68, has denied the allegations. He resigned as head of the All-American Boys Chorus Dec. 28 after five men, now ages 23 to 45, complained to the Diocese of Orange that he had sexually abused them when they were children. Four had been members of the chorus Father Coughlin founded in 1970.

Bishop Norman F. McFarland of Orange said in a statement released Feb. 10 that he withdrew Father Coughlin's priestly faculties after reviewing the allegations and discussing them with the priest.

~~The bishop said Father Coughlin denied the allegations and said he had no recollection of the events described by the men.~~

Nevertheless, all things having been considered in the context of the serious nature and scope of the allegations, it has been my judgment that Father Coughlin's priestly faculties in the Diocese of Orange must prudently be removed and Father Coughlin has been personally informed of this by me," said Bishop McFarland. He declined to comment further.

The accusations became public in a Jan. 29 letter from the diocese to the chorus' board of directors, the Associated Press reported. The 100-member choir of boys aged 9 to 14 is not affiliated with or financially supported by the diocese.

Father Coughlin Feb. 9 said he could not remember anything that would lead to the charges.

"I certainly cannot say that I know that I did it because I can't recollect anything," he was quoted as saying. "I'm a confused and very much destroyed man."

The chorus has performed with celebrities including Bob Hope, Tony Bennett, Victor Borge and Steve Allen, and recorded a Christmas album with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Associated Press said four men who complained to the diocese that Father Coughlin molested them while they were in the chorus. The fifth said he was sexually abused by Coughlin when the priest was at a seminary in Boston. Each of the alleged victims had approached the diocese separately.

no complaints had been filed