

# Scandalized Priest Resigns After Sex Abuse Allegations

The Roman Catholic priest at the center of a public furor enveloping Newark Archbishop John J. Myers has resigned from ministry, a spokesman for the archdiocese said.

The Rev. Michael Fugee, who attended youth retreats and heard confessions from minors in defiance of a lifetime ban on such behavior, submitted his request to leave ministry on Thursday, said the spokesman, Jim Goodness. Myers promptly accepted the resignation, Goodness said.

Fugee, 52, remains a priest but no longer has authority to say Mass, perform sacramental work or represent himself as an active priest, Goodness said. It was not immediately clear if Fugee or Myers would petition the Vatican to remove him from the priesthood altogether, a process known as laicization.

Asked if Myers had requested that Fugee step aside, Goodness said, "I only know that he offered to leave ministry and the archbishop accepted."

Under terms of a 2007 agreement with the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office, Fugee is not permitted to have unsupervised contact with children, minister to children or hold any position in which children are involved.

The agreement grew out of Fugee's 2003 conviction on charges he fondled the genitals of a teenage boy on two occasions. Three years later, an appellate panel vacated the verdict, ruling the trial judge should not have allowed jurors to hear the part of Fugee's confession in which he described himself as homosexual or bisexual.