

# Victims Angered By Promotion Of Priest

BOSTON (AP) — The elevation to the rank of monsignor of a priest accused of seeing another priest sexually abusing youths but not acting to stop it has angered the alleged victims.

Bishop Sean P. O'Malley of the Fall River Diocese announced he was naming the Rev. Armando Annunziato, pastor of St. Mary's Church in Mansfield, a monsignor, an honor given for exceptional service to the church.

Annunziato has been accused of interrupting the Rev. James Porter when he allegedly was molesting youngsters at a church in North Attleboro by knocking on doors and entering rooms at least six times between 1960 and 1963.

The alleged victims, now men and women in their 40s, said Annunziato did not act to stop Porter.

Porter, who has left the priesthood, has been indicted on charges of sexually molesting boys and girls in three Fall River parishes during the 1960s.

He is serving a prison sentence in Minnesota for molesting his children's babysitter in 1987.

O'Malley announced the elevation of Annunziato, who reportedly suffers from throat cancer, at a Mass at the Mansfield church, and it was reported in the Anchor, the diocesan newspaper.

The newspaper did not say why Annunziato, who was ordained a priest in 1956, was elevated, and it did not refer to the accusations against him.

"It is a very regrettable action," Roderick MacLeish

Jr., a lawyer who represents 101 alleged victims of Porter, told The Boston Globe.

"Our clients uniformly express anger about this. It's sort of a slap in the face to the people who came forward and gave their stories, and it is just apparent that the bishop didn't believe them or accept them."

Connie Lyons, father of an alleged victim, said when he heard in 1963 that Porter was molesting his son, he reported it to Annunziato but was told the priest could do nothing about it.

"I have personally told Bishop O'Malley my story about Father Annunziato, and it is apparent that the bishop believes him and not me," said John Robitaille.

Robitaille said Annunziato watched him with Porter while he was disrobed on the floor of the church basement where Porter allegedly sexually abused him.

The Globe said Annunziato denied repeated requests for interviews, but WBZ-TV reported he denied to authorities that he witnessed Porter allegedly abusing children at the church and said he knew nothing of the allegations until last May.

The Sun Chronicle of Attleboro said O'Malley has written that Porter's alleged victims are sincere in believing Annunziato witnessed the incidents but their memories may have been confused by trauma.

The Globe said it could not reach a spokesman for the Fall River Diocese Sunday night.