

# Lawsuit: Archdiocese knew about abuse claims

**Dallas:** Pastor allowed to stay at Greek Orthodox church, defendants say

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Leaders of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America knew the Rev. Nicholas Katinas had been accused of child sexual abuse but let him continue for years as pastor of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in North Dallas, an amended lawsuit claims.

"The entire lawsuit shows a pattern and practice of officials in the Greek Orthodox Church of cover-up," said Tahira Khan Mer-

ritt, the Dallas lawyer who represents alleged victims of Mr. Katinas.

The suit was amended this week and now includes a fourth plaintiff claiming to have been abused by Mr. Katinas.

Church officials would not comment on the specific allegations, and defense attorneys did not return phone calls.

Mr. Katinas retired from Holy Trinity — a center of the Dallas Greek community — in the summer of 2006 after leading the church for 28 years.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America soon suspended him, meaning he could no longer

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## DALLAS COUNTY

# Archdiocese named in lawsuit

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serve as a priest, even on a fill-in basis.

In February, a GOAA official told the Holy Trinity congregation that there had been a complaint against Mr. Katinas for child sexual abuse at another parish and that an investigation showed he had "engaged in serious moral transgressions." The official also said he was investigating an allegation of abuse by Mr. Katinas at Holy Trinity.

In April, Ms. Merritt filed the lawsuit that has now grown to four plaintiffs, all claiming to have been sexually abused by Mr. Katinas in the 1980s, relatively early in his Holy Trinity tenure.

The suit says the latest plaintiff — referred to only as John Doe IV — was an 11-year-old altar boy at Holy Trinity in 1987. Mr. Katinas sexually abused him as they were disrobing after Mass, according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit says the plaintiff informed his father, who first contacted the church secretary, then called the GOAA in New York.

Various top officials of the arch-

diocese knew of the accusation, and its vicar general, the Rev. Nicholas C. Triantafilou, came to Dallas to investigate, the suit says.

Mr. Triantafilou currently is president of Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology in Massachusetts.

The suit says Mr. Triantafilou convinced the plaintiff's father that Mr. Katinas' actions had been misunderstood. The father only came to believe his son 20 years later, after learning others had come forward to accuse Mr. Katinas, Ms. Merritt said.

Mr. Triantafilou was reached by phone Friday but said he could not comment with the lawsuit pending. He suggested calling defense lawyers, who did not return calls.

The suit also claims that Mr. Katinas committed child sex abuse at a parish he served near Chicago in the 1970s and that a parish council president suspected him of pedophilia and worked to get him removed.

Defendants in the suit include Mr. Katinas, Holy Trinity Church and the GOAA. The suit alleges, among other things, gross negli-

gence and asks for punitive damages.

On Oct. 5, Holy Trinity's presiding priest, the Rev. Christopher Constantinides, and its parish council president, George Michael, sent a letter to parishioners saying that the lawsuit's charges against the church are untrue and asking them to contribute to legal defense funds.

They estimated \$250,000 would be needed.

"If the people who brought this lawsuit are allowed to win a judgment," the letter says, "the church's assets [most notably its land and buildings] could be seized to satisfy the judgment."

Mr. Constantinides also used a recent church newsletter to pen an open letter to parishioners, acknowledging that many of them have "lost trust" in the church and withheld contributions, causing the church to struggle financially. He asked parishioners to "rise above the pain" and support Holy Trinity.

The lawsuit is scheduled to be tried in Dallas County District Court beginning June 9, Ms. Merritt said.