

Chaplain guilty of sex assault

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Staff Writer

Armed Forces officials in Edmonton have thrown a wall of secrecy around the case of a Roman Catholic chaplain involved in the second scandal at the military base in two months.

Chaplain Capt. Angus A. McRae has been sentenced to four years for buggery involving a child after being convicted two weeks ago in a closed court martial.

The Canadian Forces Base Edmonton-Namoo case has scandalized the local Roman Catholic community.

McRae was convicted of violating sections 155, 156 and 157 of the Criminal Code of Canada, which cover buggery, indecent assault on a male and gross indecency, Capt. Jim Grey said yesterday in Edmonton.

Grey refused further comment, including McRae's age, family background or where he will serve the sentence, saying he was under orders from superiors.

In June, Cpl. Larry King, 39, was sentenced in civilian court to three years in prison for choking and raping a 16-year-old Edmonton girl.

McRae is confined to the base jail for now. When or if he'll be moved is a secret.

Grey said the National Defence Act authorizes the military to try personnel for crimes, excluding rape, murder and manslaughter.

The act also permits in-camera trials "in the interest of public safety, defence or public morals," Grey added.

Under the military gag laws, none of the evidence is open to public scrutiny.

McRae is also automatically turfed out of the services "with disgrace" under the act because his sentence is longer than two years.

The severity of the sentence also means a review by Defence Minister Gilles Lamontagne.

No one was immediately available in Lamontagne's Ottawa office for comment.

Roman Catholic Chaplain-General F.H. Boucher said he was familiar with the case, but that any information concerning McRae's background would have to come from the press office.

Father Hamilton, assistant to Edmonton Archbishop Joseph MacNeil, said McRae's sentence likely will be appealed. He also said there are no plans to excommunicate McRae.

Asked whether McRae would be allowed to continue as a priest despite the conviction, Hamilton said "it's possible."

sters, after police received reports he had fondled two brothers, aged 12 and 14.

On July 21, he pleaded guilty to the charges in Scarborough Provincial Court.

A court transcript shows McRae "began paying a lot of attention" to the older brother in July, 1988. He'd take him bowling and golfing. At night, McRae would visit the boy and his brother at their home, "talk about things like erections and masturbation," and stay very late while the boys' parents were in another room.

Transcripts show McRae started squeezing the older boy's buttocks, something that aggravated him enough to tell the priest to "keep his hands to himself."

Then McRae turned his attention to the younger boy.

Eventually, church officials were notified and passed the complaints on to the Catholic Children's Aid Society.

In McRae's defence, lawyer Frank Morrocco said McRae had failed to take his sex-drive-inhibiting medication during the period the assaults occurred.

Judge A. Davidson sentenced McRae to three years' probation and ordered him never to have contact with anyone under 18 years of age unless in the presence of an adult.

McRae is now attached to the Edmonton Archdiocese, but church officials won't say what work he is doing.

Shortly after his conviction, McRae wrote a letter to his former parishioners, saying he was innocent of the charges. "As much as I hated it and against my conscience and to save families further embarrassment I took it on the chin."

By way of explanation, McRae said the boys and their parents were "extremely introverted" and he was spending time with the oldest brother to help him "out of his shell."

McRae wrote that he remembers putting his arm around the youth a few times, but nothing more.

McRae also says he was originally going to plead not guilty, but changed his mind when police and crown counsel said several other youths, some girls, had come forward with similar complaints.

Tomorrow: The Catholic church pays up.