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Former Illinois priest gets 10 years for sexual abuse

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MILWAUKEE — A former Illinois priest accused of sexually assaulting an altar boy he took on trips to Wisconsin two decades ago was sentenced to 10 years in prison Friday after telling the court he broke not only state law but God's law.

Francis Engels, 69, of Kewanee, was sentenced in Milwaukee County Circuit Court on two counts of second-degree sexual assault.

Prosecutors said the offenses dated from when he took a teenage altar boy from his Roman Catholic parish in Peoria to Milwaukee hotel rooms in the early 1980s.

The former altar boy, Dan Koenigs, 37, testified about the abuse at the sentencing.


He recalled becoming an altar boy and being asked by the priest to go with him to a picnic.

"My folks were elated," he said. "They thought it was great and I thought it was great. We had a great time, and then he took me back to the rectory and sexually abused me."

Engels was removed from public ministry in 1993.

He was extradited from Illinois to face the charges and on April 15 entered a plea conceding he would likely be convicted by a jury based on evidence against him but did not admit wrongdoing.

"I've broken the laws of this state and even more so the laws of God

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which I had promised to obey," he said before being sentenced to five years in prison on each charge.

Koenigs' attorney, Joe Klest of Schaumburg, said earlier that his client accused Engels and two other priests of molesting him many times from 1980-85. Charges could not be brought in Illinois because the statute of limitations had lapsed, Klest said, but the clock stopped on the Wisconsin allegations when the priest left the state.

Koenigs also filed a civil lawsuit against the three priests and the Peoria diocese.

A settlement was reached and the lawsuit was dismissed in March. Terms were not announced, but Koenigs had sought \$1 million in damages.

6/4/05

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