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## Munich archdiocese official resigns

by Tess Crebbin by Catholic News Service

**MUNICH, Germany** -- An official of the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising responsible for a priest who has become the focus of the German sexual abuse scandal has resigned and the priest has been suspended from active ministry by the archdiocese.

Father Joseph Obermeier, head of pastoral care for the archdiocese, resigned March 15 at the request of Archbishop Reinhard Marx, according to an archdiocesan statement.

The archdiocese suspended the priest, who was named only as "H." in a statement but was identified as Father Peter Hullermann in published reports. He was accused of sexual abuse of a child in 1980 and was convicted in 1986 of sexually abusing children. The priest was serving in the Bavarian resort town of Bad Tolz when the suspension was announced.

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The archdiocese said Father Obermeier was asked to resign because he had not fulfilled his duties in monitoring the priest's activities.

The steps taken by the archdiocese were the latest developments in the evolving German sexual abuse crisis. The actions followed published reports that Father Hullermann had been assigned to ministries in Bavaria where he was in contact with children since his conviction.

Pope Benedict XVI was archbishop of Munich at the time Father Hullermann first arrived in the archdiocese in 1980 from Essen Diocese to undergo treatment following the first abuse allegation made against him. Then-Archbishop Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict, approved the transfer that called for Father Hullermann to live in a parish rectory.

While he was undergoing treatment, Father Gerhard Gruber, vicar general at the time, assigned Father Hullermann to a Munich parish, contrary to what had been agreed to when the future pope approved the transfer, the archdiocese said in a March 12 statement.

Father Gruber took "full responsibility" for the assignment March 12, saying that the future Pope Benedict knew nothing about it, according to a statement from the Vatican.

After his treatment concluded in September 1982, Father Hullermann was assigned as associate pastor of a parish in Grafing. While assigned there, new allegations of abuse arose in January 1985, resulting in charges of child sexual abuse being filed against the priest. Father Hullermann was convicted and fined about \$1,000 and sentenced to 18 months probation.

The German daily newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung reported March 13 that Father Hullermann was assigned to a parish ministry that allowed him to be in contact with children, including Mass servers, following his conviction. The assignments included a year as chaplain at a retirement home and associate pastor and then administrator of a parish in Garching/Alz.

In May 2008 Father Hullermann left the parish at the request of Archbishop Marx and was assigned as chaplain at the congregation in Bad Tolz, the archdiocese said.

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Archdiocesan officials were unaware of any incidents of abuse after the 1986 conviction, according to the archdiocese.

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