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Victims urge private funeral for KC priest accused of abuse

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NCR Today

Msgr. Thomas J. O'Brien, subject of more than two dozen lawsuits alleging sexual abuse of minors, one of which ended in a \$10 million settlement against the Kansas City-St. Joseph diocese, died this week according to his lawyer, The Kansas City Star is reporting. He was 87.

Leaders of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, SNAP, are asking Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-St. Joseph to keep funeral services for O'Brien discreet.

Six lawsuits against the diocese involving O'Brien are pending. In July the diocese settled a wrongful-death lawsuit for \$2.25 million with the parents of a boy whose family claimed he took his own life 30 years ago because of repeated sexual abuse by O'Brien.

O'Brien, who was ordained a priest in 1950 and served in a number of Kansas City parishes, was principal of a Catholic high school 1961-1968 and superintendent of Catholic schools for the diocese 1969-1971.

He was removed from parish ministry in 1983 after the diocese received a complaint of sexual misconduct by O'Brien involving a teen age boy. He was returned to restricted ministry in 1984, working as part-time hospital chaplain until 2002 when more accusations of sex abuse of minors by him surfaced. He was removed from ministry and ordered not to present himself as a priest in public. He was not defrocked.

?Dozens of boys who were sexually assaulted by Msgr. Thomas O'Brien have suffered enough. And thousands of Catholics who were scandalized and betrayed ? by Msgr. O'Brien's crimes and church cover

ups ? have suffered enough,? David Clohessy, director SNAP, wrote in a message to Finn.

?Please do not add to their pain. Please do not let Msgr. O'Brien be buried in a Catholic cemetery with full honors in a public ceremony," Clohessy wrote. ?The least [the diocese] can do now is to avoid rubbing even more salt into their intense wounds.?

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