

Priest in Foley scandal removed from ministry: Further charges possible

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Anthony Mercieca, the priest at the center of the abuse scandal involving former member of Congress Mark Foley (R., Fla.), has been removed from active ministry by the Archdiocese of Miami.

Foley, 52, resigned his seat in the House in September after it was revealed that he had had sexually explicit online conversations with teenage congressional pages. The scandal continued to reverberate last month as a House ethics committee questioned Republican leaders on how long they were aware of Foley's indiscretions.

Foley said he was sexually abused as a youth by a priest years ago in Florida. The Catholic Archdiocese of Miami later confirmed that Mercieca, 72, now living on the Maltese island of Gozo, was the priest involved. Mercieca served in the Miami archdiocese from 1965 to 2002.

Foley has said he will not press charges against Mercieca, who admitted fondling and skinny-dipping with the youth but denied having sex with him. But Mercieca could face further sanctions from the church after an internal investigation, according to officials of the archdiocese. *-Religion News Service*