

# New York Newsday

EDITION

## Sex Suit Charges Priest

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STAFF WRITER

A mother of three has filed suit charging her Queens parish pastor forced her into a sexual relationship after she learned she had multiple sclerosis and turned to him for spiritual guidance to prepare for death.

The suit, which seeks \$375 million, alleges that after Susan Langford's illness went into remission, Msgr. Nicholas Sivillo of Our Lady of Hope in Middle Village convinced her "only his prayers were keeping her well."

Frank DeRosa, spokesman for the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, said: "Our attorneys feel that there is no legal basis for the complaint. The allegations are serious and being looked into, but there is no comment on the specifics in the complaint at this time."

Besides Sivillo and the diocese, the suit, filed last week in Brooklyn State

Supreme Court, names the parish and three diocesan officials.

Langford, 42, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in January, 1989. In an interview yesterday, she said her doctor told her to consider getting her affairs in order.

"I just called a priest . . ." she said. "He [Sivillo] came over and that's how it started."

According to the suit, Sivillo became a regular visitor, establishing close ties to Langford, her husband and their three children. Langford and her husband divorced in 1993 and she said she believes the priest had a key role in the breakup.

The suit said that in May, 1990, Sivillo told Langford he loved her. When Langford responded that they had to sever ties, Sivillo "immediately began hugging, kissing and grabbing plaintiff, stating no one could help her like he could, and

only his prayers were keeping her well and preventing her illness" from recurring.

The next day, the suit said, Langford again tried to break off the relationship, but Sivillo came to her house and suggested they go for a ride to talk. They ended up at his summer home at Long Beach, L.I., where, the suit said, the priest suggested they lie together naked, saying, "This was okay in the eyes of God."

The suit said that after this, Sivillo resumed visiting up to three times a week.

"Langford, feeling totally and completely dependent on defendant, Sivillo, and convinced that absent his counseling she would again become deathly ill, succumbed to defendant Sivillo's sexual advances and began engaging in acts of sexual intercourse with him," the suit said.

"I felt trapped," Langford said yesterday. "He said he was my lifeline. He said he gave me the prayers that kept me healthy, he gave me love that nobody else would, that no one else could. I was completely fearful that if I didn't see him, I was going to get sick."

In February, according to Langford and her suit, she notified diocesan officials. "They did nothing," she said.

Langford's attorney, Cary Scott Goldinger, of Garden City, L.I., said church officials offered his client a settlement before she had retained a lawyer. The offer, he said, was unacceptable.

"My entire life was affected in a deleterious way," said Langford, who now lives on Long Island. She added that she now trusts nobody and doesn't "ever intend to go back into a church again."