NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

Suspended priest sentenced to eight years in prison for molesting teen

Catholic News Service | Aug. 7, 2013
Sacramento, Calif.

A suspended Sacramento priest was sentenced Friday to eight years in a California state prison for pleading no contest a month earlier to charges that he molested a girl when she was 13.

The Sacramento Bee reported that after Fr. Uriel Ojeda apologized to the girl, her parents and Catholic officials, Judge Eugene L. Balonon of Sacramento Superior Court handed down the sentence.

In July, after Ojeda's plea agreement was announced, Sacramento Bishop Jaime Soto issued a statement saying that "now justice has been done.

"The courage of a young woman and her family has stopped the violence from happening to others," the bishop said.

"The harm inflicted on a young child, her family and the many who placed their trust in Father Ojeda will still take much time to heal," he continued. "Trust is a precious gift for which the minister must always honor and respect those who give it. May God shepherd his people toward healing and hope."

Ojeda was charged with seven counts of molestation after his arrest in late 2011. But the *Bee* said six of the charges were dropped when he entered the no-contest plea.

According to a letter written by the girl and read in court by Deputy District Attorney Allison Dunham, the molestation took place sometime between June 2007 and June 2009, when Ojeda was serving at Holy Rosary Parish in Woodland.

Court records show he entered the girl's bedroom at night when everyone was asleep. She woke and found him lying next to her and said he touched her in a way "that constitutes substantial sexual conduct."

In the letter, the girl said she "freed myself" when she told her parents about the sex abuse in November 2011. She also said the priest has "left a little dent in my life that will always be there."

According to the *Bee*, once she informed her parents of the molestation, they told Sacramento diocesan officials, who immediately reported it to local law enforcement and Child Protective Services.

By then, Ojeda was serving at a parish in Redding. The *Bee* reported that church officials went to the church, removed him from ministry and turned him over to the police.

The newspaper also quoted a letter the parents addressed to the priest. In it, they told him they had always been "a loving, supportive family to you, and in return, you betrayed our friendship and trust ... harming our lives and our daughter's life."

A request for Ojeda's laicization has been submitted to the Vatican.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/19/2014 - 13:34*): http://ncronline.org/news/people/suspended-priest-sentenced-eight-years-prison-molesting-teen