

# Teacher Sentenced in 1950's Orphanage Beating

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A former teacher at a northern New Jersey high school was sentenced today to five months in prison for severely beating a teen-age boy at an orphanage here in the 1950's.

The man, Thomas Cuthbert Ford, 66, a former Christian brother who taught math at Bergen Catholic High School in Oradell, N.J., turned himself in to Canadian authorities on Thursday and pleaded guilty to one count of assault causing bodily harm.

Prosecutors had recommended a six-month sentence, while Mr. Ford's lawyer asked for a conditional sentence that would mean no jail time.

Originally charged in 1996 after a lengthy investigation in Canada, Mr. Ford dropped from sight for three years and then fought efforts to extradite him from Hackensack, N.J.

He originally was charged with nine counts of assault, but Canadian prosecutors withdrew eight of the charges in return for Mr. Ford's return to Canada and guilty plea.

At Thursday's hearing, he apologized to the victim, Edgar Hartery, who was 14 when he was beaten by Mr. Ford at the Mount Cashel Orphanage in St. John's in the late 1950's. The boy was left unconscious in a shower; the authorities say Mr. Ford hit Mr. Hartery with his fists and belt.

Mr. Ford was then a member of the Congregation of Christian Brothers, which operates orphanages, social service agencies and schools. The order, which has its American headquarters in New Rochelle, N.Y., has declined to say whether he is still a member.

Mr. Ford resurfaced last year after vanishing from his job at Bergen Catholic, which is run by the Christian Brothers order. He disappeared shortly after being indicted on charges that he assaulted nine children at Mount Cashel. The charges against Mr. Ford were part of a 10-year investigation of physical and sexual abuse at the orphanage.

The first reports of abuse reached Newfoundland police in 1975, but an inquiry was halted. Investigators later discovered that the authorities had helped cover up the allegations.

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