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N.Y. Parish Fires Nuns For Teaching Evolution

NEW YORK, Jan. 6 (AP)—A Roman Catholic parochial school on Staten Island has dismissed its principal and two of the nuns accused of teaching evolution and not adhering to Church doctrine about devils, angels and sin.

The dispute reflected widespread, current tension in the Roman Catholic church over old and newer styles of teaching theology.

Action removing the three nuns was taken by the Rt. Rev. Msgr. John J. Cleary, pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption parish, after complaints against them — circulated by Mrs. Patricia E. Sohm, assistant principal of the school — were printed in the parish bulletin.

The district superintendent of Catholic schools, the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph T. Riordan, teaching heresy" and were "not in conflict with Church doctrine."

"There's a terrific age gap there," he said. "The nuns are

young, and the pastor is literally 75."

At their mother house in Chicago, to which the three nuns have returned, the principal, Sister Mary Ellen Poland said the Staten Island parish uses the Baltimore Catechism of 1885—a doctrinal presentation in precise question and answer form, long used in Catholic schools but now widely replaced by materials designed to build personal understanding.

Sister Mary Ellen said the accusations circulated against the three nuns were full of distortions, particularly the blatant statement that we taught "there is no sin."

Concerning the presentation of evolutionary theory, which many Church theologians today recognize as one way God may have acted in creation, Sister Mary Ellen said she felt the "best in every in every area of knowledge" should be presented to children.