



Archdiocese of San Antonio

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Archdiocese of San Antonio agrees to settlement in lawsuit involving alleged sexual misconduct by Father John Fiala.

The Archdiocese of San Antonio has reached a settlement in a lawsuit involving a 19 year old man who alleges he was sexually assaulted by Father John Fiala when the priest served at Sacred Heart of Mary parish in Rocksprings. Fiala is member of the religious order, The Society of our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity and worked in the archdiocese from 2005 to 2008. The case was settled for just over \$946,000.00. The settlement was paid through the archdiocese's insurance program.

Announcing the settlement, Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller said; "I deeply regret that any Catholic priest would ever harm a young person. In order to help to begin to bring closure to this painful chapter and help the victim, his family, and our people to start the process of healing, we felt it was important to settle at this time. This young man and his family remain in our prayers.

While we understand that no institution's single program or policy can wipe the stain of sexual abuse from our culture, we remain committed, through our Office of Victim Assistance and Safe Environment, our many faithful priests and deacons, lay parish leaders and volunteers to continue our age appropriate training and prevention programs that have reached literally thousands of children and adults in our archdiocese."

In September of 2008 the archdiocese was approached by a member of the plaintiff's family, and concerns were raised over Fiala's interfering with the parenting of this teenager. The archdiocese inquired as to whether there were any concerns of sexual misconduct; the family member advised that there were no such concerns.

The then-Archbishop José Gomez spoke with Fiala who denied any inappropriate conduct. The archbishop told him to immediately stop interfering with the rights of the custodial grandparents.

Following his conversation with Fiala, Archbishop Gomez felt that further inquiry into the nature of the concerns was merited. In early October of 2008, Father Martin Leopold, Moderator of the Curia, met with Edwards County Sheriff Don G. Letsinger who provided the archdiocese with evidence to support Fiala's "interference in the custody of a minor."

As a result, Fiala was suspended from all priestly ministry in the Archdiocese of San Antonio pending further investigation. On October 11, 2008, Father Leopold visited the parish where Fiala was assigned and informed

the people of his suspension and the sheriff's investigation. The evidence of custodial interference formed the basis for the permanent removal of Fiala from his position as Pastoral Administrator of Sacred Heart of Mary Parish in Rocksprings, TX and its missions; St. Raymond's in Leakey, TX and St. Mary Magdalen in Camp Wood, TX, effective October 24, 2008.

As the archdiocese continued its cooperation with the Edwards County Sheriff's department's investigation, it learned of the suspicions that there may have been sexual contact between the plaintiff and Fiala. The Archdiocese of San Antonio's first complaint of sexual abuse from the plaintiff or his family came only when the lawsuit was filed in April, 2010.

In announcing the settlement, Father Leopold said, "We pledge to continue our efforts to prevent abuse and the potential for abuse through our policies and procedures. The protection of our children and young people will always be the highest priority of the Archdiocese of San Antonio." He also pledged the archdiocese full cooperation with the Edwards County Sheriff's criminal investigation into the Fiala case.