



Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama

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Office of the Bishop

August 13, 2025

My dear brothers and sisters,

As you know, Father Bob Sullivan announced to his congregation on August 2 that he would be taking personal leave from his priestly responsibilities beginning Monday, August 4. I also notified you by email of his intention.

Regarding these notifications, it should be recalled that, first, it is not our norm to send out notices of personal leave; however, we did so in this case in recognition of Father Sullivan's diocesan role as Vicar General. Second, as is our practice regarding any type of personal leave of absence, we did not provide a reason for his leave.

Today, however, a national media organization has published a story based on information it received related to Father Sullivan's leave. In it, the writer shares a complaint the organization received in late July from a woman alleging a personal relationship with Father Sullivan, dating back to 2009.

In light of the publication of this allegation, it is necessary and appropriate to deviate from our regular practice and disclose that our diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator also received this allegation in late July. In closely adhering to our diocesan guidelines for such allegations:

- The allegation was immediately reported to the Alabama Department of Human Resources, since it involves an allegation of a relationship that began when the woman reporting the allegation may have been under the age of 18.
- While the Alabama Department of Human Resources determined that the allegations did not match the requirements for opening an investigation, a diocesan investigation was initiated, again, according to Church law and our diocesan policies and guidelines.
- Our diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator has continued to be in contact with the woman who brought forth the allegations and has provided appropriate support.
- The allegation also was presented to our Diocesan Review Board, which is comprised of attorneys, professionals in psychology and child welfare, and lay members of the community. The Board provides advice and counsel to me when such allegations are presented and did so in this case.
- Additionally, Church law states that any allegation that may involve a relationship between a person under the age of 18 and a member of the clergy must be reported to the Dicastery of the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican. That report is being developed now for submission to the Dicastery for its review and consideration.
- Father Sullivan was granted a leave of absence and is currently removed from all priestly service pending the outcome of the investigation.
- We do not know the timeframe for completion of the work of the Dicastery in Rome nor of that which will be further required within our diocese.

Again, it was not my intention to disclose this information prior to full resolution of the investigation - the initial work of any investigation does not lend itself to a definitive determination, and anyone accused in the Church possesses a presumption of innocence until proven otherwise, equivalent to the right granted in civil law. In sharing this with you now, I ask your continued prayers for all involved, for each other, and all people of our diocese. I also stress the need for absolute adherence to our policies and guidelines for Youth Protection and the reporting of allegations to our Victims Assistance Coordinator.

Any inquiries you receive regarding this matter should be directed to Donald Carson, diocesan Director for Communications. He may be reached at 205-838-8310 or dcarson@bhmdiocese.org.

May Mary, Mother of the Church, and our diocesan patrons Saint Paul and Saint John Vianney, assist all in our Diocese to remain steadfast in the love of the Lord.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Steven J. Raica". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Most Reverend Steven J. Raica
Bishop of Birmingham in Alabama