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New details of child sex abuse claims against two priests in Greensburg Diocese revealed



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**Bob Mayo**  

Reporter

PITTSBURGH — New details about alleged child sexual abuse by two different Diocese of Greensburg priests were revealed Wednesday.

One priest, who the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office says served in 15 Greensburg Diocese parishes since 1980, is charged with sex crimes against an altar boy spanning several years in Fairchance, Fayette County.

The crimes were allegedly committed inside the sacristy of St. Cyril and Methodius Parish and in an upstairs bedroom of that church's rectory.

Father Andrew Kawecki, 65, is charged with involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, indecent assault, and corruption of minors against the altar boy, who was 11 years old when the abuse allegedly started in 2004. It allegedly continued for several years.

Kawecki has been arraigned, is free on unsecured \$50,000 bond and is ordered not to have contact with the alleged victim, who's now in his late 20s.

"The assaults left a profound, lasting imprint on the victim's life," wrote a State Attorney General's Office investigator in the criminal complaint. "These experiences drove him to anger, rage, depression, chemical dependency, and eventually several suicide attempts."

Meanwhile, the Greensburg Diocese revealed new sex abuse allegations against another priest - one who previously entered a guilty plea in 2014 to theft of thousands of dollars from Seven Dolores Church in South Huntingdon, Westmoreland County.

Father Emil Payer allegedly abused "multiple minors and vulnerable adults" in Indiana County in the 1980s. The statute of limitations has run out for criminal charges in the sex abuse allegations against Payer, the Diocese stated. Payer was sentenced to probation in the theft case as part of a plea agreement.

The diocese is adding Payer to its list as having "credible and substantiated" allegations of child sexual abuse. It says Payer denies the allegations.

Both Kawecky and Payer are still priests but have been removed from active ministry.

Kawecky's preliminary hearing is set for Sept. 9 at 1 p.m. before a magisterial district judge in Masontown.

"With the release of our Grand Jury report on abuse two years ago, I promised we would hold anyone who was abusing children accountable, no matter how powerful the institution behind them," Attorney General Josh Shapiro said in a written statement. "Survivors experience a lifetime of anguish and trauma trying to overcome the impact of abuse, especially when it is committed by the hands of their own parish priest. No coverup is too long, no institution too powerful to stop us from doing our job. We will not let predators get away with the sexual assault of children."

Shapiro's office said the 2018 Grand Jury report on clergy sexual abuse generated over 2,000 tips to the office, including information that led to Kawecky's arrest. It said anyone with information relevant to Kawecky should contact the office's Clergy Abuse Hotline at 1--888-538-8541.

"Anyone struggling to come forward, know that my office is listening, we are here, and we won't be afraid to take on tough fights to do what's right," Shapiro said.

The office of Diocese of Greensburg Bishop Edward Malesic issued a statement saying, "We remind you that if you, or someone you know, has suffered abuse at the hands of anyone related to the church, the Diocese is here for you to offer support, counseling, spiritual guidance and pastoral care. Indeed, even if the abuse occurred outside our diocese or if the

time since the abuse occurred has been many years, there are no limitations or time limits to our willingness to help survivors of abuse to heal."

Payer, the statement said, "One important fact regarding Father Payer is that there were no allegations of child sexual abuse in his file, or received by the Diocese of Greensburg, prior to us being contacted in 2018 about these allegations of child sexual abuse."

The Diocese statement included the following detailed timeline:

- "The Diocese of Greensburg was informed by law enforcement of two allegations of child sexual abuse related to Father Payer in October of 2018.
- "The reports were made directly to PA ChildLine and referred to law enforcement for investigation. Per policy, the Diocese fully cooperated and deferred to law enforcement's criminal investigation into the allegations.
- "The Indiana County District Attorney and PA State Police conducted their criminal investigation into the allegations and determined that the allegations, which dated back to the mid-1980s, were beyond the statute of limitations for criminal charges.
- "Other than determining that the allegations were beyond the applicable criminal statute of limitations, the Indiana County District Attorney and PA State Police did not investigate or make a determination on the merits or credibility of the allegations.
- "Thus, in early 2019, the Diocese initiated its own canonical investigation to determine if the allegations were credible and substantiated.
- "An independent investigative firm was contracted to conduct the preliminary canonical investigation to determine whether the allegations met the criteria of both 'credible and substantiated.'
- "'Credible and substantiated' means that the allegation(s) were proven to be supported by either an admission by the individual to the abuse, a preponderance of the evidence, or through a comprehensive canonical, civil or criminal investigation.

- "The investigation was thorough and comprehensive, and included multiple interviews with alleged victims, victims' families, witnesses, employees, parishioners, members of law enforcement, and the accused.
- "A group of mostly lay leaders and several clergy belonging to an independent diocesan review board reviewed the results of this independent canonical investigation. The board was made aware that Father Payer denied the allegations. Nonetheless, this board recently determined that the allegations were both 'credible and substantiated.'
- "The Diocese is publicizing Father Payer's name on our list of clergy offenders in order to encourage any other survivors to come forward.
- "Again, when asked, Father Payer denied all of the allegations of sexual abuse."

Regarding Kaweck, the Diocese wrote in a separate statement:

"The Diocese of Greensburg has and will continue to fully cooperate with authorities regarding the investigation involving Father Kaweck. In May of 2019, the Diocese of Greensburg received its first and only allegation against Father Kaweck when the alleged victim applied to the Survivor's Compensation Fund. After receiving the information on the application, the Diocese notified PA ChildLine and local law enforcement. Father Kaweck was immediately removed from ministry and his parishioners were notified about the allegation. Father Kaweck denies the allegation.

"If the allegation is found to be credible and substantiated, his name will be added to the Diocese of Greensburg's List of Clergy with Credible and Substantiated Allegations Against Them. 'Credible and substantiated' means that the allegation was proven to be supported by either an admission by the individual to the abuse, a preponderance of the evidence, or through a comprehensive canonical, civil or criminal investigation.

"As always, we remind you that if you, or someone you know, has suffered abuse at the hands of anyone related to the Church, please report the abuse to PA ChildLine immediately. The Diocese is here for you to offer support, counseling, spiritual guidance and pastoral care."

The Greensburg Diocese did not release the number, date, or locations of the allegations concerning Payer.

The Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office listed the following assignments in which Kawecki served after being ordained in 1980:

May 1980 - Associate Pastor, Immaculate Conception, Irwin, PA

May 1981 - Associate Pastor, St. John Baptist, Perryopolis, PA

August 1983 - Associate Pastor, St. Mary of Czestochowa New Kensington, PA

June 1990 - Parochial Vicar, St. Sebastian, Belle Vernon, PA

July 1990 - Chaplain, Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Belle Vernon, PA

July 1990 - Chaplain, Knights of Columbus, Belle Vernon, PA

June 1992 - Reverend, St James, Maxwell, PA

June 1992 - Reverend, St Julian, Isabella, PA

June 1995 - Pastor, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Leckrone, PA

June 2002 - Pastor, Church of the Resurrection, Clymer, PA

July 2004 - Pastor, St, Cyril and Methodius, Fairchance, PA

July 2007 - Administrator, St. Hubert, Point Marion, PA

June 2013 - Pastor, St. John the Baptist, Scottdale, PA

June 2013 - Administrator, St. Joseph, Everson, PA

May 2016 - Trust Advisor, Conn-Area Catholic School, Connellsville, PA