

FSSP Pastor Arrested on Child Pornography Charges in Providence

Father Jackson was formerly pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Littleton, Colorado.



Father James Jackson delivers the homily at the funeral Mass for slain Boulder police officer Eric Talley on March 29, 2021, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in Denver, Colorado (photo: null / Screenshot)

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Father James Jackson, a priest of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (FSSP) and pastor of St. Mary's Church in Providence, Rhode Island, was arrested at the parish on Oct. 30 and charged with three crimes related to child sexual abuse material.

Father Jackson, 66, was charged with possession of child pornography, transfer of child pornography, and child erotica prohibited, the Rhode Island State Police announced Sunday.

The arrest stemmed from an investigation by Rhode Island State Police Computer Crimes Units/Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, which discovered that the internet connection at the rectory at St. Mary's Church was being used to share child sexual abuse material, the state police said. The state police executed a search warrant on Saturday at the parish and then arrested Jackson after determining that he was the owner of the material, the state police said.

Father Jackson was formerly pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Church in Littleton, Colorado. He gave the homily at the March 29 funeral Mass for Eric Talley, a Boulder police officer and Catholic father of seven who was killed in a mass shooting at a Colorado supermarket. Jackson became pastor at St. Mary's, a Traditional Latin Mass parish, on Aug. 1.

In Rhode Island, the charge of "child erotica prohibited" is defined as the production, possession, display, or distribution of "any visual portrayals of minors who are partially clothed, where the visual portrayals are used for the specific purpose of sexual gratification or sexual arousal from viewing the visual portrayals."

If convicted of all three charges, Father Jackson faces up to 21 years in prison.

An Oct. 31 statement from the Diocese of Providence said that Father Jackson "has been prohibited from the sacred ministry and the exercise of the office of pastor" by Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence as a result of the arrest. The statement said the diocese had been presented with a letter of suitability for ministry for Father Jackson prior to his arrival in the state, and that the parish will continue to be entrusted to the care of the FSSP.

"The Diocese of Providence applauds the efforts of the Rhode Island State Police and the other law enforcement bodies involved in making this arrest," the diocese's statement said. "We look forward to working with law enforcement and the Attorney General to ensure the safety of children."

Bishop Tobin added "the use of child pornography is a serious crime and a grave sin," and that the charges against Father Jackson "are very disturbing to all and must be taken very seriously."

"At the same time, I renew my pastoral concern and offer my fervent prayers for the good people of St. Mary Parish during this difficult time," he said.

A statement from the FSSP said the order was "shocked and saddened by news of Father Jackson's arrest and the serious allegations against him."

“Before starting his current assignment at the beginning of August, Father underwent a criminal background check and had a sterling record of priestly service,” the FSSP statement said.

“We had no reason to believe Father was engaging in any inappropriate behavior, let alone criminal conduct. Like all those accused of crimes, Father has a natural human right under both civil and canon law to the presumption of innocence and we will fully cooperate with the law enforcement authorities as they investigate this matter.”

The FSSP said it was praying for those involved and that their “hearts go out to all those who have been hurt by sexual misconduct of any kind.”

This story was updated after posting to correct the ordination year of Father Jackson.

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