

San Francisco Archdiocese Quietly Puts Priest on Leave after Allegation of Abuse, SNAP Calls for More Transparency

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In late October a parish priest from the Archdiocese of San Francisco was quietly put on leave by Catholic officials after they received an allegation of abuse. While we are grateful that Fr. David Ghorso was immediately put on leave, as best we can tell, the information about this accusation was not shared with the wider community. We are now calling on Church leaders from San Francisco to be more transparent and forthcoming with parents and parishioners.

Fr. Ghorso was accused of sexual abuse in a lawsuit filed in California thanks to the state's open civil window. In the letter sent to parishioners at St. Charles and St. Matthias churches, Catholic officials attempted to downplay the allegations against the cleric, saying that they dated back "30-40 years," and that Fr. Ghorso has had "39 years of faithful priestly ministry." To us, this attempt at minimization only makes us more worried; if Fr. Ghorso abused a child so early in his career, then there should be extra scrutiny given to every place he has worked. Those who abuse children seldom have just one victim.

Following his ordination in 1981, Fr. Ghorso worked for 14 years at St. Vincent's School for Boys and Camp Armstrong. The camp was located within the Santa Rosa Diocese and pulled boys from all over Northern California. It is also worth noting that Camp Armstrong was renamed after its namesake, **Fr. Peter Armstrong**, was accused of abusing a boy in Marin County. At the time that Fr. Ghorso worked at the school and camp, both were owned by the Archdiocese of San Francisco and there was an overlap between Fr. Ghorso's time and Fr. Armstrong's time.

Given the allegations against Fr. Ghorso and the fact that his career put him in close proximity to children, we believe Catholic officials in San Francisco owe it to parents and parishioners to publicize the accusations against him across Northern California. In particular, anyone who ever attended either St. Vincent's School or Camp Armstrong must be made aware of the allegations and encouraged to come forward to police and therapists.

It is especially concerning to us that Fr. Ghorso appears not to have had a pastoral assignment from 2000 until he was assigned to the parish of St. Charles in San Carlos and St. Matthias in Redwood City. This gap in his work history should be explained and clarified.

Catholic officials in San Francisco owe parents, parishioners, and the public far greater transparency than they have afforded them so far. We call on Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone to reissue an announcement to his entire Archdiocese and to include details about the gaps in Fr. Ghorso's work history. The Archbishop should also notify his brother bishops in Northern California of the accusations. To do anything less is an affront to the promises of openness and transparency of the Dallas Charter.

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