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FEATURED

Diocese: Retired priest restricted from ministry over alleged misconduct at Johnstown parish

By Ronald Fisher
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The Rev. Stephen J. Gergel, a retired priest, has been restricted from public ministry following allegations of misconduct with a young adult while he served a Johnstown parish.

The Most Rev. Mark L. Bartchak, bishop of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown, announced the action in a press release Saturday.

The alleged misconduct took place while Gergel was pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Johnstown, where he served from November 1969 through July 1989.

Bartchak said the complaint has been referred to Pennsylvania ChildLine and the Cambria County district attorney.

Cambria County District Attorney Kelly Callihan was out of her office Saturday but did respond to The Tribune-Democrat via email.

“Any referrals I have received from the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown have been forwarded to the Office of Attorney General for investigation due to their ongoing probe,” she said.

It was not confirmed on Saturday if any referrals involving Gergel were sent from Callihan’s office to Attorney General Josh Shapiro.

Gergel was ordained as a priest in 1962.

After his time at St. Francis of Assisi, he served as a chaplain in the U.S. Navy until his retirement in November 2005.

Since his retirement, Gergel has resided in Georgia, Bartchak said.

A letter from the bishop will be read at all masses at St. Francis of Assisi this weekend, the diocese said.

Bartchak urged anyone with information regarding possible sexual abuse of minors to contact law enforcement.

Ronald Fisher is a reporter for The Tribune-Democrat. Follow him on Twitter @FisherSince_82.

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