



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

Attorney General Peter F. Neronha

[Home](#) » [Press Releases](#) »

Statewide Grand Jury returns indictment charging former Woonsocket priest with multiple counts of child molestation

Statewide Grand Jury returns indictment charging former Woonsocket priest with multiple counts of child molestation

Published on Thursday, November 05, 2020

An indictment, information, or complaint is merely an allegation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

PROVIDENCE, R.I. – Attorney General Peter F. Neronha announced that on November 2, 2020, the Statewide Grand Jury returned an indictment charging John Petrocelli with three counts of first-degree child molestation and nine counts of second-degree child molestation.

As alleged in the indictment, the charges against the defendant stem from his actions while he served as an assistant pastor at Holy Family Parish in Woonsocket sometime between November 6, 1981 and October 3, 1990.

The indictment alleges that the defendant committed multiple acts of child molestation against three male victims who were all under the age of 14 at the time of the alleged assaults.

"There is nothing more critical to the mission of my Office than to deliver justice on behalf of victims and of the people of Rhode Island, regardless of the time that has passed after the alleged offense," said Attorney General Neronha. "Our ongoing review of alleged misconduct by clergy in Rhode Island is intended to achieve that result wherever possible."

The secret indictment was unsealed and the defendant was arraigned in Providence County Superior Court on the afternoon of November 5, 2020.

Since last year, the Attorney General's Office has been conducting a review of allegations of clergy child sexual abuse and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Providence's handling of such allegations. In connection with that review, the Office has gained access to records of the Diocese. Where the Office's review develops evidence of alleged criminal misconduct, the Office and the Rhode Island State Police are committed to conducting a thorough investigation of such alleged misconduct and bringing criminal charges where appropriate.

The review remains ongoing.