

Diocese of Metuchen addresses sentencing of priest

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<https://diometuchen.org/news/diocese-of-metuchen-addresses-sentencing-of-priest>

PISCATAWAY – Fr. Thomas Ganley, who pleaded guilty in April to sexual assault, was sentenced today to four years in prison.

The former part-time parochial vicar at St. Philip and St. James and part-time chaplain at St. Luke's Warren Campus Hospital, both in Phillipsburg, was previously identified on the list of names of clergy currently under investigation by civil authorities as released by the Diocese of Metuchen in February of this year.

“The allegations against Fr. Ganley, which were first made known to the Diocese of Metuchen once he was arrested on January 16, are very sad, disturbing and sickening,” said Anthony P. Kearns III, Esq., spokesperson and chancellor of the Diocese of Metuchen. “As in all circumstances involving the protection of young people, the Diocese of Metuchen has cooperated fully with law enforcement,” said Kearns.

Previous to this case, the diocese had never received any allegations against Fr. Ganley and he has had no prior

contact with the legal system, according to Kearns.

“While his crime is nearly 30 years old, the survivor of his abuse deserves healing and we hope his sentencing and the justice it brings will help to facilitate the healing process,” said Kearns.

The Most Rev. James F. Checchio, Bishop of the Diocese of Metuchen said, “Our hearts ache for this survivor and on behalf of the local Church of Metuchen, we are committed to the healing and welfare of all survivors of abuse. These criminal and sinful actions will not be tolerated, now or in the future, we stand ready to provide pastoral care, counseling assistance and support, even while ensuring that we do all that can possibly be done to avoid such actions in the future.”

Fr. Ganley was immediately suspended from all priestly ministry, the parishes where he had served were informed of the news and Bishop Checchio made an almost immediate pastoral visit to the parish where he was last stationed.

Fr. Ganley was immediately taken into custody at the sentencing. As part of his plea, Fr. Ganley will also be required to have no contact with the victim or the family of the victim and no unsupervised contact with any child under age 18. He will be required to register as a Megan’s Law sex

offender.

“In addition to his criminal charges, his case will be forwarded to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the Vatican to continue the Church’s process to ensure that he will not be able to minister as a priest in the future,” said Kearns. “No cleric in the Diocese of Metuchen who has had a credible accusation of child sexual abuse is in ministry,” he said.

In 2002, the Diocese of Metuchen examined all clergy files to review any reasonably available and relevant information pertaining to allegations of sexual abuse, in an audit conducted by an outside law firm and the diocesan chancellor.

As a result of that audit, the diocese turned over to law enforcement every alleged case of sexual abuse or misconduct, including cases that pre-dated the founding of the diocese, most of which took place between the 1960s and 1980s but only came to light much later. Since the initial audit, the diocese has required background checks, child protection training for all who work or volunteer with children and has implemented zero-tolerance policies.

An additional review of diocesan archives, done by an independent, outside law firm, was completed to prepare the list of credibly accused clergy released this past February. The list of 10 priests and 1 deacon included a review of the files of the 344 diocesan priests who have served in the

history of the diocese.

In addition to the many measures already in place to create safe environments in its parishes and schools, the Diocese of Metuchen also relies on a Review Board. The board consists of 9 members: two medical professionals, one psychologist, two former judges, one former county prosecutor, two members of the clergy, and one survivor of clerical sexual abuse. The Diocesan Review Board reviews every accusation as soon as it is received, unless there is an active criminal investigation. Upon the completion of every criminal investigation, should the civil authorities deem the matter not to be criminal or barred by the statute of limitations, the board conducts its own investigation and analysis to determine the credibility of the allegations. The board then makes its findings and recommendations known to the diocese and the bishop then takes all necessary and appropriate action.

To facilitate healing and transparency, the Diocese of Metuchen published a list of all diocesan priests with credible accusations on its website. Combined, these actions seem to be achieving the desired results, as it has been decades since the diocese has had a minor abused in one of its parishes or schools, according to Kearns.

The Diocese of Metuchen is among the five Catholic dioceses in N.J. that established an Independent Victim Compensation Program to compensate those who, as children or young adults, were sexually abused by a priest or deacon of the diocese. The statewide program is being independently administered by two noted victims' compensation experts and aims to support abuse survivors

by providing them with an efficient alternative to litigation that is both speedy and transparent, to resolve their claims with a significantly lower level of proof and corroboration than required in a court of law. Since its founding thirty-eight years ago in 1981, the Diocese of Metuchen has paid approximately \$1.5 million dollars in settlements.

Anyone who has been sexually abused by any clergy in the Church, is encouraged to reach out to local law enforcement and the Diocesan Response Officer at (908) 930-4558 to report an offense or arrange for counseling assistance.

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