

Retired St. Louis priest admits to possessing child pornography

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By [Jonah McKeown](#)

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A retired Vincentian priest who ministered in St. Louis until last year pleaded guilty Wednesday to possessing thousands of images containing child pornography.

Father James T. Beighlie, 72, is a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, also called the Vincentians. According to the Department of Justice, Beighlie pleaded guilty to two counts of possession of child pornography on Oct. 12.

Ordained in 1979, Beighlie had served as associate pastor at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis for approximately two years until May 2021, provincial spokesman Chris Duggan told CNA.

In his Wednesday plea agreement, Beighlie admitted that on May 17, 2021, while he was working at the Congregation of the Mission in St. Louis, colleagues found compromising images of him on a church printer, the DOJ reported. As a result, the Congregation of the Mission Western Province opened an internal investigation during which Beighlie was removed from his position as associate pastor at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in St. Louis and placed in a monitored environment, the province said.

Based on the results of the internal investigation, the province notified law enforcement. According to the DOJ, about 6,000 images of child sexual abuse material were found on one computer; another computer had 236 images and 40 videos containing child sexual abuse material. Several thousand of the images were contained in two PowerPoint presentations created by Beighlie, the DOJ says.

“We are deeply saddened and disappointed,” said provincial superior Vincentian Father Patrick McDevitt in an Oct. 12 statement.

“The behavior for which Fr. Beighlie is accused runs contrary to the Vincentian charism, our mission, and everything we stand for. Exploitation of children through pornography is a grave sin and has no place in society,” McDevitt said.

McDevitt stressed that the province has cooperated with law enforcement and prosecutors in this case and will continue to do so.

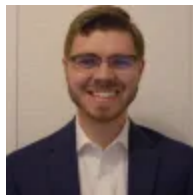
Beighlie worked in environments involving children in several capacities in Missouri prior to his suspension in May 2021. Prior to his assignment at St. Vincent de Paul parish, Beighlie served as associate pastor at Our Lady Queen of Peace parish in House Springs, Missouri, which has a St. Vincent DePaul Youth Chapter.

Before that assignment, Beighlie was on the faculty at St. Thomas Aquinas/Mercy High School in St. Louis and at Vincent Gray Academy in East St. Louis, Illinois. Prior to that, he served as chaplain at DePaul Hospital in St. Louis, spokesman Duggan told CNA.

There are no other known allegations of sexual abuse of a minor involving Beighlie, Duggan said.

The DOJ says Beighlie is scheduled to be sentenced Jan. 10, 2023. The law under which he was charged carries penalties of between 10 and 20 years in prison.

Founded by St. Vincent de Paul in 1625, the Congregation of the Mission is a worldwide order dedicated to serving the materially poor, to education, and to the formation of new priests in accordance with the teachings and philosophy of its founder. The order's U.S. Western Province is based in St. Louis.



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