

CRIME

Former Boise priest convicted in brutal child porn case dies in prison

Father W. Thomas Faucher, 75, was found unresponsive in the Idaho State Correctional Institution Thursday morning.



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BOISE, Idaho — A former priest who served at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Boise for decades before being arrested in a violent child pornography case that shook his parishioners and detectives alike is dead.

Father W. Thomas Faucher was 75. He was less than two years into a 25-year fixed prison sentence at the Idaho State Correctional Institution.

According to Idaho Department of Correction spokesman Jeff Ray, Faucher was found unresponsive in the ISCI medical unit Thursday morning. Despite attempts to resuscitate him, he was pronounced dead at 10:52 a.m.

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The inmate's death appears to have been from natural causes, Ray said.

Faucher had already retired from his position as priest when police raided his diocese-owned home in northwest Boise in February of 2018, seizing thousands of violent and sexual images and videos, some of which showed victims as young as infants and toddlers being raped and tortured.

Prosecutors said later that the evidence collected in the case was among the most disturbing that members of the Idaho Internet Crimes Against Children task force had ever encountered.

Detectives also recovered extensive online chat logs in which Faucher wrote about his desire to rape and murder a child, mused about sexually assaulting an altar boy at his church, and discussed traveling to South America to abduct and abuse a small boy before killing that child.

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Faucher later told a judge he did not remember writing those messages, or sending an email containing photos of two children being sexually assaulted by adult men. He pleaded guilty to two counts of distribution of child pornography, two counts of possession of child pornography and possession of LSD in September 2018, saying he wanted to "take responsibility" for what he had done.

Then-mayor Dave Bieter was among those to ask the judge for leniency at Faucher's sentencing, writing in a letter that the priest had provided counsel and solace after the death of Bieter's parents. The mayor later told KTVB that although he was "deeply disturbed and angry" about what Faucher had done, showing compassion and forgiveness are central tenets of his faith.

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Although his defense attorney asked for probation, the sentence of 25 years without parole handed down by the judge all but guaranteed the retired priest would die behind bars.

Faucher was defrocked - officially removed from the position as clergy by the Vatican - after his conviction, and Idaho Court of Appeals upheld his 25-year sentence earlier this year.

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