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BREAKING

Archdiocese: Former Dubuque priest faces allegation of sexual abuse

BY ERIK HOGSTROM erik.hogstrom@thmedia.com

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Leo P. Riley circa 1994

Photo by: Archdiocese of Dubuque

Archdiocese of Dubuque officials said today that a former Dubuque priest has been accused of sexually abusing a minor in the 1980s.

The Rev. Leo Riley is accused of abuse stemming from 1985 to 1986, when he was an associate pastor at Church of the Resurrection, according to a press release issued today by the archdiocese.

The release states that Riley is now an active priest of the Diocese of Venice, Fla.

Riley is listed as pastor of San Antonio Parish, located in Port Charlotte, Fla., according to the Diocese of Venice website. Dubuque archdiocese officials said Riley has been placed on administrative leave for the duration of the investigation.

Dubuque archdiocesan spokesman Deacon John Robbins said the individual leveling the allegations against Riley notified church officials on May 5.

The Most Rev. Richard E. Pates, apostolic administrator of the Dubuque archdiocese, has been in contact with the Most Rev. Frank J. Dewane, the Bishop of Venice, who placed Riley on administrative leave, according to the release.

The Archdiocese of Dubuque Review Board for the Protection of Minors launched the investigation.

“There really isn’t a timeline (for the completion of the investigation),” Robbins said. “Each case has its own unique circumstances.”

Church officials said the investigation into the allegation will follow protocols outlined by the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, a comprehensive set of procedures established by U.S. Catholic bishops more than 20 years ago.

“Each case has to be handled by the charter and our own archdiocesan policies,” Robbins said.

Information provided by archdiocesan officials about that process states that a private investigator will conduct the investigation, and a report will be given to the review board, whose members read and meet to discuss it.

Based on the investigation, the review board may reach four possible outcomes:

- The information does not support a reasonable belief the allegation is true.
- The information is not sufficient to form a reasonable belief as to whether the allegation is true.
- The information supports a reasonable belief the allegation is true.
- The information supports a reasonable belief an incident happened but does not "come under the definition of sexual abuse as defined" in policy.

The Venice bishop, Dewane, reported on the allegation in a letter to parishioners dated May 17.

“Father Riley strenuously denies that the allegation is true and maintains he is innocent,” Dewane wrote.

Dewane wrote that church officials in Florida await the results of the Dubuque investigation.

Dubuque Police Department Lt. Brendan Welsh said local authorities are aware of the allegations against Riley.

“Anyone with information regarding this report is encouraged to contact investigator Isaiah Hoff,” Welsh said.

Hoff’s phone number is 563-589-4429, and his email is IHoff@cityofdubuque.org.

Archdiocesan officials also seek information from anyone who knows of sexual abuse allegations concerning Riley when he was working in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

People with information are asked to call 563-556-2580.

The recently announced allegation is not the first against Riley. In March 2015, a former Dubuque resident publicly accused Riley of abusing him in October 1985, when the former resident was in fourth grade and serving as an altar boy at Resurrection.

In July 2015, now-retired Dubuque Archbishop Michael Jackels wrote in a letter to parishioners that “the best information available does not support a reasonable belief that the allegation is true.”



Robbins said the current allegation against Riley was made by a different individual than the person who made the allegation eight years ago.

Riley was ordained a priest of the Dubuque archdiocese in 1982. He requested a move to the Diocese of Venice in 2002 to be closer to his parents. He became a priest of the Florida diocese in 2005.

Dewane describes in his letter to parishioners how Riley was vetted before his arrival in Florida.

“Prior to accepting Father Riley for assignment, the Diocese of Venice was assured there were no previous allegations of misconduct in the Archdiocese of Dubuque,” Dewane wrote. “Father Riley also passed fingerprint and all background screening required under diocesan policy.”

