

CRIME

Catholic Diocese of Youngstown priest dies by suicide after second abuse claim

The Repository

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YOUNGSTOWN – A priest who was facing a second allegation of inappropriate contact with a minor has died by suicide, the Catholic Diocese of Youngstown said.

The Rev. Marian Babjak, who once served as associate pastor at St. Paul Catholic Church in North Canton, died Monday in Houston where he was seeking therapeutic treatment.

At the time of his death, the diocese was preparing to announce a new investigation into an allegation of inappropriate physical contact with a minor.

A look back: Priest who served in North Canton placed on leave

A look back: Struthers priest resigns following abuse investigation

Babjak was placed on administrative leave in November 2021, when the first allegation was reported to the diocese. The diocese announced in July 2022 that he had resigned his position as pastor of Christ Our Savior Parish in Struthers following an independent investigation.

“The Diocese of Youngstown is devastated by Father Babjak’s death, and the trauma that will be experienced by all involved,” Bishop David Bonnar said Tuesday in a statement. “As I extended my sincere condolences to those who mourn and offer my prayers for Father Babjak’s eternal rest, I wish to support those who have come forth with allegations. It is important that we as a Church support all victims of abuse and any inappropriate conduct, and remain vigilant and transparent.”

What was Rev. Marian Babjak accused of? Diocese of Youngstown opened investigation into 'inappropriate contact'

The first allegation involved a minor who is now an adult. After an independent investigation, the Diocesan Review Board found that the allegation in question did not constitute sexual abuse, but that a violation of the diocese's Standards of Ministerial Behavior had occurred.

The Review Board recommended that Babjak engage in a period of evaluation, after which the diocese might consider him for future active ministry. He resigned as a parish pastor and remained on administrative leave during his time of evaluation.

The diocese said it received a second allegation Sept. 27 through its victims assistance coordinator. It also involved a minor who is now an adult. The second allegation was unrelated to the first and came from Slovakia, where Babjak had served as a priest before coming to the Diocese of Youngstown.

It involved multiple alleged incidents.

'We all have a role to play.' Suicide response coordinator talks community after cluster

Babjak was informed of the new allegation on Sept. 30, the diocese said.

In addition to serving at St. Paul and Christ Our Savior parishes, he served at St. Charles Borromeo in Boardman, as well as pastoral assignments in Slovakia. He was ordained in 1995.

The diocese encouraged anyone who has experienced misconduct by a clergy member or church employee to contact public authorities or the diocese directly through victims assistance coordinator Dominic Colucy at 330-744-8451, ext. 293, or dcolucy@youngstowndiocese.org; or call the confidential diocesan response line at 330-718-1388.

Where to get help

Need help? The following resources are available any time of day:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8255 (or, simply dial “988”)

Stark County Crisis Hotline: 330-452-6000

Crisis Text Line, text ‘4hope’ to 741-741

Trevor Project Lifeline for LGBTQ youth: 866-488-7386

Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860

Military & Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255, press 1

Military & Veterans Crisis Text Line: 838255

CommQuest Detox at Aultman Hospital: 330-830-3393

Learn how to make your home a “Safe Home” by removing unnecessary risks for substance abuse and suicide at starkmhar.org/prevention-resources/safe-home.