

. **CRIME & SAFETY**

Central NY priest admits to inappropriately texting underage girl, gets probation, DA says

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Homer, N.Y. – A Central New York priest accused of forcibly touching a minor admitted to inappropriately communicating with a minor and was sentenced to probation.

[Nathan Brooks](#), 37, was arrested in September 2023 and accused of touching a young girl between 2019 and 2021 as well as texting the teen “flirty” messages, according to court documents filed in Homer Town Court.

At the time of his arrest, Brooks was an administrator at the Church of the Nativity at St. Joseph in LaFayette, Immaculate Conception in Pompey, St. Leo in Tully and St. Patrick Mission in Otisco.

On Tuesday, Brooks admitted to inappropriately messaging the victim throughout 2020 and 2021, according to a news release from the Cortland County District Attorney’s Office.

He pleaded guilty to endangering the welfare of a child and was sentenced to probation, prosecutors said.

His admissions also satisfied charges in Cortland City Court stemming from allegations he had inappropriate contact with a minor on a bus for a church-sponsored trip. In the end, those charges could not be prosecuted by the

Cortland County district attorney because the trip originated in Onondaga County. So, the forcible touching charges were dropped.

The plea agreement in Homer town court was reviewed by both counties' district attorneys' offices and the victims' family, according to the news release.

The charges were filed after the victim, who had turned 18, came forward to police with concerns that Brooks may be inappropriately interacting with other young girls, according to a deposition the girl gave to the Cortland County Sheriff's Office.

In her [disposition](#), she detailed the allegations of inappropriate communication and touching.

He would send "flirty" messages regarding a couple from the show "The Office," the girl told deputies. He told her to delete the messages so her mother would not find out he was in contact with her, she said.

In her statement, the girl said that just a few months before she turned 18, she realized something was wrong. She said she cut off all contact with Brooks in June 2023 and told her mom about what had been going on.

“I had many incidents and encounters with [Brooks] that made me uncomfortable and I now know he was grooming me,” she told deputies.

Brooks was ordained in 2019 at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Syracuse.

He has been suspended from his duties since his arrest in September, Syracuse Catholic Diocese spokesperson Danielle Cummings said. He will remain on suspension until the church completes its own internal investigation, she said.

The inappropriate messages that Brooks admitted to sending also violate church policies regarding clergy members communicating with minors, prosecutors said.

The Cortland County DA's office also alleges that while the Syracuse Catholic Diocese cooperated with their investigation, it made some errors in the early stages of the investigation that contrasted with a [commitment](#) it made to local district attorneys,

The DA's office said that the diocese disclosed the allegations late, failed to confirm the submission of the reported incident to law enforcement and minimized the conduct of the offender.

The diocese said in a statement that they received the report on June 28, 2023 and submitted a letter containing the complaint to the police on July 1, 2023.