

Welcome back Msgr. McCarthy! 50 years in priesthood celebrated by man falsely accused of child molestation

By JAMES LENT [Jun 14, 2013](#) [Updated May 12, 2026](#)

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EAST HANOVER TWP. - In 2002, Monsignor William McCarthy saw his life hurled into upheaval.

He had just left his parish, St. Rose of Lima Church on

Ridgedale Avenue, and was settling into retirement when someone sent a letter to local law enforcement authorities with accusations the priest had sexually abused two girls, ages 5 and 6.

Though he vigorously denied the charges he was not allowed to perform any Catholic duties while the Morris County Prosecutor's Office investigated. The Paterson Archdiocese suspended him from his priestly faculties and the Vatican watched.

The prosecutor's office never pressed charges and in 2007 he was found innocent by the Vatican tribunal.

Last Sunday St. Rose welcomed him back with open arms as the church held a mass honoring the 50th Anniversary of McCarthy's ordination to the priesthood.

An overflowing nave saw McCarthy enter in jubilation, the crowd standing and cheering, a sight not usually seen within the confines of a church building.

As the monsignor made his way forward a Knights of Columbus Honor Guard stood paying tribute. The monsignor's family had come, including relatives from Ireland and as far away as Australia Even Sayreville, McCarthy's current home, was represented. Sayreville Mayor Kennedy O'Brien was in attendance.

As he walked up onto the altar he turned and faced the

crowd, arms upraised. "50 years. Who said I wouldn't last," he exclaimed and again the ovation was deafening. Father Jack Cittern, offering the homily, told parishioners McCarthy's biography and his tribulations.

He noted McCarthy was born in Ireland and in 1963 was ordained a priest there. He was a priest at numerous parishes in the United States and taught religion at Bayley Ellard School in Madison.

In 1992 Pope John Paul II made him a monsignor, an honorary title conferred upon a diocesan priest at the request of the priest's bishop. By being named a monsignor McCarthy is considered to be a member of the papal household.

Cittern discussed "The Conspiracy," the book McCarthy wrote in 2010 detailing his ordeal.

Cittern added his own impressions.

"He was accused he molested two girls in 1980," Cittern said. "Two women accused him but they were not the girl's family. The diocese ordered him to resign temporarily and stripped him of his duties. He was presumed guilty from day one.'

"I called him and he was fully outraged," Cittern continued. "He wanted me to help him sue the diocese for \$25 million."

The priest got a laugh with his next line. "I'm proud to say I talked him down to \$24 million," he said.

Noting the "outright calumny," Cittern declared "an innocent priest was destroyed by the hierarchy of the church. How could regulatory rights cause justice to be tossed aside?"

He said of McCarthy, "the pain was indescribable" yet noted McCarthy worried his parishioners "might be disappointed " in him.

McCarthy forgave his accusers. "The highest spirit is to forgive one's enemies," Cittern said. "You forgive before you feel like forgiving."

As he bid the monsignor goodbye he said, "You were grieving when lives were torn apart, We will miss the wings of your compassion more than you will ever know."