

NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE December 16, 2011

Archdiocese reports allegation of sexual abuse

Priest takes leave of absence

December 16, 2011 (OMAHA, NE) – A Carter Lake, Iowa man is alleging he was sexually abused by an Omaha priest from 1991 to 1994.

The Rev. Al Salanitro – pastor of St. Bernadette Parish in Bellevue – is on a leave of absence while the Archdiocese of Omaha investigates his accuser’s allegation.

“We take every accusation of sexual abuse very seriously,” said Deacon McNeil, chancellor of the Archdiocese of Omaha. “We reported the allegation to local law enforcement officials and the Archdiocesan Review Board.”

McNeil said a letter was mailed Thursday to the homes of parishioners and school parents informing them of the allegation.

McNeil said Salanitro denies the allegation. “If there is no evidence of sexual abuse of a minor, Father Salanitro will be returned to ministry,” McNeil said. “If there is sufficient evidence that Father Salanitro committed sexual abuse of a minor, Archbishop George Lucas is obliged to send the case to the Vatican for instruction on how to proceed.”

Salanitro, 52, was ordained by Archbishop Daniel Sheehan in 1989. He was appointed pastor of St. Bernadette in 2006. He also served at the following parishes: St. Francis Borgia in Blair (2000-2006), St. Anne in Dixon and St. Mary in Laurel (1995-2000), Holy Cross in Omaha (1991-1995), and St. Elizabeth Ann in Omaha (1989-91).

The Archdiocese of Omaha recently learned that its child protection policies and procedures are in compliance with the comprehensive action plan adopted by the U. S. bishops in 2002 to protect children and young people and to deal pastorally and effectively with allegations of abuse.

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To date, Archdiocese of Omaha parishes and schools report that more than 36,000 children have been trained in the various aspects of safe environments, personal safety and abuse prevention and that more than 20,000 archdiocesan clergy, employees, volunteers who work with children and parents also have received background checks and safe environment training and materials.

McNeil said the archdiocese is committed to serving the needs of anyone who has been abused by any member of the clergy or Church employee. He said victims should contact the Archdiocese's Victim Outreach and Prevention Manager, Mary Beth Hanus, at 888.808.9055 to report incidents of abuse.

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Founded as a diocese in 1885, the Archdiocese of Omaha serves spiritual and human needs in a 23-county area of Northeast Nebraska. Through its 147 parishes and missions, the archdiocese reaches out to 227,000 Nebraska Catholics. With two Catholic universities, 56 elementary schools, 17 high schools and a parish-based religious education program within its boundaries, Catholic education enriches the lives of some 58,000 young people. The Archdiocese of Omaha is one of the largest private social service providers in the region. Catholic Charities and the Family Life Office lead a network that ministers to the broadest and most fundamental needs of our community. Generous support to the Annual Appeal is symbolic of the collective faith that allows the Archdiocese of Omaha to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. www.archomaha.org