News



Students walk into St. Mary's Catholic School in Boise, Idaho, Nov. 2, 2015. Retired priest Fr. W. Thomas Faucher, who was recently charged with sexual exploitation of a child, distributing sexually exploitative material involving children and drug possession, had served as pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Boise. (CNS photo/Chaz Muth)

by Catholic News Service

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The arrest of a retired Boise Catholic priest on multiple charges of sexual exploitation of a child, distribution of child pornography and drug possession has shocked Catholics in the statewide Diocese of Boise.

"When I first heard of these allegations, I was absolutely stunned," Boise Bishop Peter Christensen said in a statement Feb. 6. He said that "there are no excuses" for the behavior described in the charges.

Fr. Thomas Faucher, 72, was arrested Feb. 2 and charged with 10 counts of sexual exploitation of a child, two counts of distributing sexually exploitative material involving children and two counts of drug possession. "All of the charges, except one of the drug counts, are felonies. If convicted, he faces a lifetime in prison," reported the Idaho Statesman daily newspaper.

"If these allegations are true and proven in court, they are a betrayal of the trust we place in all ministers such as Father Faucher. Anyone who takes advantage of and exploits children for their own gratification is absolutely wrong. There are no excuses for such behavior by any one of our clergy," Christensen said.

Christensen stated the diocese has never received complaints about Faucher. If the diocese had, he said, it would have immediately contacted law enforcement officials "as it would for any such report."

The Idaho Statesman reported that at a Feb. 5 hearing, the prosecutor said law enforcement officials had found "hundreds of images of child pornography and drugs including marijuana, ecstasy and LSD" in the priest's home.

Faucher was being held in the Ada County jail but was released after posting a $250,000 bond the evening of Feb. 6. A judge ordered him to have no contact with children. His next court date was scheduled for Feb. 15.

Ordained for the Boise Diocese in 1971, Faucher was pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Boise for some years before he retired about three years ago. He was raised in Boise and graduated from St. Mary's Grade School in 1959. While he was pastor, he contributed a number of articles for Catholic News Service's Faith Alive! religious education package.

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In his statement, Christensen said, "We must pray that the truth of this matter is revealed (and) pray that any children who are exploited may be healed by the grace of God, as we also pray for an end to such a disgusting evil."

In a follow-up statement Feb. 7 the diocese said it was issuing in response to questions, church officials said they "would like to make clear that" the diocese "is not paying for Father Faucher's legal defense" and was not contributing to the bond for his release. "Also, the diocese does not pay the rent for Father Faucher's rental property," the statement emphasized.

On behalf of the diocese, Christensen urged victims of child sexual abuse to come forward and report such abuse to law enforcement officials. He also said they should call Veronica Childers, the diocese's safe environment and victim assistance coordinator at (208) 350-7556.