News



by James Dearie

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Saginaw, Michigan — March 22, 2018
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This story was updated to include Bishop Cistone's statement March 26, 2018 at 8:12 a.m.

After a sting operation resulted in the arrest of a Saginaw diocese priest in late February, another priest has been suspended amid reports of sexual misconduct, and diocesan property has been raided by the police.

Fr. Ronald J. Dombrowski, 72, a sacramental minister at Holy Family Parish in Saginaw, was suspended over the weekend after an adult contacted the diocese claiming to have suffered abuse by the priest as a child, the Midland Daily News reported March 19.

Dombrowski is not allowed to present himself as a priest publicly or have contact with people under 21 while the case progresses. He has not been charged with a crime.

On March 22, the Saginaw News reported that police had raided the rectory of the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption, Saginaw diocese's offices, and the house of Bishop Joseph Cistone. It is not clear what officers were searching for, but local officials say that the diocese's refusal to cooperate with their investigation into sex

abuse in the church necessitated the raids.

"Contrary to the statements of the diocese and the bishop that they would fully cooperate with law enforcement, they did not," county prosecutor Mark Gaertner told the paper. "Therefore it was necessary for law enforcement to use other investigative tools, including search warrants."

"I understand this news is distressing and disheartening for the greater community and most especially our Catholic faithful," Cistone said in a March 23 statement acknowledging the raids emailed to NCR.

"The Diocese has made a sincere effort to cooperate with law enforcement to date and will continue to do so moving forward," he added.

The suspension and raids follow the Feb. 25 arrest of Saginaw priest Fr. Robert DeLand after an adult man and a 17-year-old boy both alleged that they had been abused by the priest. Like Dombrowski, DeLand was suspended after his arrest.

The Saginaw diocese initially denied having knowledge of any previous accusations against DeLand, but later admitted that a woman had contacted the diocese in 2005, suggesting that her brother, who had committed suicide, may have been one of DeLand's victims.

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In the aftermath of the arrest, officials signaled that they expected to have more dealings with the local church soon.

"We are getting tips on other priests," Tittabawassee Township detective Brian Berg told the Saginaw News a few days after DeLand's arrest. "I would imagine when we verify some of the information we're getting, that other priests will be under investigation."

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