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Baltimore — May 22, 2018
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The Baltimore Archdiocese said May 22 it has removed a 77-year-old priest from ministry after learning of allegations of child sexual abuse against him dating to the 1970s.

Fr. Luigi Esposito, pastor at Our Lady of Pompei Church in Baltimore, was serving as associate pastor at Our Lady of Pompei when the alleged abuse occurred.

The alleged victim claims the abuse began at age 14 and occurred multiple times while the minor was at Our Lady of Pompei. The priest has denied the abuse occurred.

The archdiocese said in a news release it has been cooperating with the civil authorities.

"On May 17, after receiving permission from civil authorities to make contact with Father Esposito, representatives of the archdiocese met with him to discuss the allegations," the archdiocese said in a statement. "He denied all the allegations against him. The archdiocese spoke a number of times with the alleged victim and the allegations were consistent."

As per its policy, the archdiocese suspended Esposito from ministry and removed his faculties to function as a priest, pending the outcome of its investigation.

Archdiocesan representatives met with parishioners and staff at Our Lady of Pompei May 21 to inform them of the allegations, answer questions and help provide pastoral care to the parish community. The archdiocese also has offered counseling assistance to those affected.

Esposito was ordained a Vincentian priest in 1964 in Naples, Italy. He was associate pastor of Our Lady of Pompei in Baltimore from 1964 to 1984, then was named its pastor in 1987. He was a teacher, coach and athletic director at Our Lady of Pompei High School from 1964 to 1987.

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He was incardinated into the Archdiocese of Baltimore in 2000.

In announcing the allegation against the priest and the action taken by archdiocesan officials, the Archdiocese of Baltimore urged anyone with knowledge of any child sexual abuse to come forward and report it immediately to civil authorities.

If any such claims involve clergy or other church personnel, the archdiocese urged people to also call the archdiocesan Office of Child and Youth Protection Hotline (866) 417-7469.

"The Archdiocese of Baltimore is committed to protecting children and helping to heal victims of abuse," it said.