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Vatican City — February 20, 2019
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U.S. Msgr. Joseph Punderson, a senior official of the Vatican's highest court, was instructed by his bishop to resign his Vatican post late in 2018 and then was removed from ministry 15 years after he was found to be credibly accused of the sexual abuse of a minor.

The abuse was reported to the Vatican, and Punderson offered to resign in 2004, but the Vatican allowed him to continue working.

Punderson's named was included on a list of credibly accused clergy published by the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey, Feb. 13. Bishop David O'Connell heads the diocese.

After initially declining to comment, Alessando Gisotti, interim director of the Vatican press office said Feb. 20 that Punderson "is no longer in service at the tribunal of the Apostolic Signature and has been in retirement since last fall."

Rayanne Bennett, director of communications for the Trenton Diocese, said in a statement Feb. 20 that diocesan records indicated Punderson "was credibly accused

in 2003 of the sexual abuse of a minor 26 years earlier."

"The allegation, the first and only claim against Msgr. Punderson, was promptly reported to the appropriate prosecutor, who declined to pursue criminal charges," Bennett said.

"The allegation was also reported to the Holy See, and Msgr. Punderson submitted his resignation in 2004," Bennett said. "The Holy See, however, permitted him to continue in office but under specific restrictions regarding public acts of ministry initially imposed by the Diocese of Trenton in 2003."

Punderson, who was named defender of the bond at the Apostolic Signature in 1995, "was instructed to resign his Vatican position by the bishop in late fall 2018 and his resignation was accepted. He has been removed from all public ministry," Bennett said.

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