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Charlotte, N.C. — March 29, 2019
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The priest serving as vicar general and chancellor of the Diocese of Charlotte has resigned his position after the diocesan lay review board determined an allegation of sexual misconduct was credible.

The resignation of Msgr. Mauricio West took effect March 25.

The diocese said in a March 28 statement from Bishop Peter Jugis posted on the website of the Catholic News Herald, the diocesan newspaper, that the alleged events occurred in the mid-1980s when West was the vice president for student affairs at Benedictine-run Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, North Carolina.

The allegation stemmed from "multiple instances of unwanted overtures toward an adult student over a two-year period," the statement said.

West began his ministry as a Benedictine monk at Belmont Abbey and served for a decade in several faculty and administrative positions at the college including as director of residential life and vice president for student affairs, the school said March 28 in a statement. In addition, he later held a seat on the college's board of trustees.

The person involved met with the lay review board in February to discuss the allegation, the statement said.

"Msgr. West has denied the allegation. During a period of counseling and assessment, he will be on a leave of absence from his ministerial duties," it added.

A college official expressed sorrow over hearing about the allegation.

While West has denied the allegation, Benedictine Abbot Placid Solari, who is the college's chancellor, said in the statement that school officials remained "deeply sorry for the victim and have apologized personally to the individual."

"Although we cannot undo the past, we are dedicated to preventing such inappropriate behavior in the future," Solari said.

The diocese said that while the alleged behavior "did not constitute sexual abuse and did not involve a minor," the allegation of potential sexual misconduct was referred to the lay review board as per diocesan policy. Misconduct includes boundary violations and improper behavior by clergy, laypeople and church volunteers involving children and adults, the diocese said.

"Personally and on behalf of the Catholic Church, I extend our deepest apologies to the victim in this case and pray for all who have suffered from misconduct," Jugis said "The Diocese of Charlotte is committed to taking all necessary steps to root out all inappropriate behavior and to being open and transparent about our handling of all allegations of such conduct."

Solari said the school remained committed to preventing sexual misconduct and provides regular training and education to the abbey community on the prevention of sexual harassment and misconduct.

He added, "While it is disheartening that a former student and our entire community have been hurt by this allegation, we are committed to honesty and transparency in handling all allegations of misconduct."

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