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Washington — May 30, 2019
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The attorney general of Michigan has charged five priests, most whom had been removed from ministry, with sex abuse crimes, following a monthslong investigation.

Michigan's Attorney General Dana Nessel announced May 24 charges against Timothy Michael Crowley, 69, Neil Kalina, 63, Vincent DeLorenzo, 80, Patrick Casey, 55, and Jacob Vellian, 84, who was charged with two counts of rape.

All but Vellian, who lives in India, were arrested in various U.S. states where they now live, but officials are working on extradition for Vellian, the attorney general's office said in a news release posted on its website. A sixth person, Fr. Lawrence Ventline, is "facing an administrative complaint and his license as a professional educationally limited counselor" has been suspended, the attorney general's website said.

The arrests are linked to alleged crimes in the Kalamazoo and Lansing dioceses and the Detroit Archdiocese, where the men once worked but where most had already been removed or left public ministry. Respective dioceses issued statements following the announcement of the arrests.

Referring to Vellian without naming him in a statement, the Diocese of Kalamazoo said it was cooperating with the investigation of "a former visiting priest from the

Archeparchy of Kottayam, India, of the Syro-Malabar Church, who served in the diocese in the early 1970s for one year." He is accused of raping a child under 16. He worked at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Benton Harbor in the early 1970s, according to local news reports.

In a statement on its website, the Archdiocese of Detroit spelled out that Casey had been removed from ministry in 2015 when an allegation was made against him and officials have "entered into the canonical process appropriate for this allegation."

Kalina, the archdiocese said, left active ministry in 1993 and had been ordained a priest for the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Mission, "a religious order that operates separately from Archdiocese of Detroit." However, when an allegation surfaced about the priest in 2017, the archdiocese worked with the local prosecutor's office and turned the complaint over to the religious order to which he belongs, the archdiocese said.

Ventline was restricted from public ministry after a 2016 allegation, but he had not been assigned to full-time parish ministry for nearly 20 years, the archdiocese said.

"The Archdiocese of Detroit deeply regrets the pain inflicted upon victim-survivors, and offers continued prayers for their peace, healing and pursuit of justice," the statement said. "We continue to cooperate fully with all civil authorities, in the hope that these partnerships may pave the way toward a future of greater trust and transparency. One sinful, criminal act, especially against God’s most vulnerable and trusting children, is unacceptable and one suffering soul too many. We remain committed to preventing sexual abuse against anyone -- especially children and vulnerable adults."

In its statement, the Diocese of Lansing said it had previously removed Crowley and DeLorenzo from ministry "after complaints of sexual abuse with a minor." The diocese has requested that DeLorenzo be laicized and is awaiting a decision from Rome, the statement said.

Crowley was removed from ministry by the Diocese of Lansing and has been laicized, the diocese said, but before that happened in the early 2000s, the Archdiocese of Anchorage appointed Crowley as its chancellor, "despite the Diocese of Lansing warning the archdiocese of these allegations."

The Lansing Diocese explained that "after the adoption by U.S. dioceses of the 'Charter for the Protection of Children and (Young People)' in 2002, Crowley was removed from ministry in the Archdiocese of Anchorage."

"I welcome today's action so that the truth can come out and justice may be served," said Lansing Bishop Earl Boyea in a statement. "Any priest who commits reprehensible acts against children does grave harm to victims. He betrays the priesthood and the entire church. I pray that Christ brings healing to all involved."

Regarding the arrests, Nessel said, "This is just the tip of the iceberg," hinting more legal action as officials comb through church documents and continue to receive tips from a hotline.

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