News

Fr. Michel J. Mulloy (CNS/Courtesy of West River Catholic)

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Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Fr. Michel J. Mulloy — who had been appointed but not installed as bishop of Duluth, Minnesota — after an allegation of sexual abuse was raised against him from the 1980s when he was a priest in South Dakota.

The installation, which was announced June 19, was scheduled to take place Oct. 1.

The resignation was announced in Washington Sept. 7 by Msgr. Dennis Kuruppassery, representing Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

Fr .James Bissonette, diocesan administrator for the Duluth Diocese — who will continue this role until the appointment of a new bishop — said the resignation announcement was accompanied by a notification from the Diocese of Rapid City of "an accusation of sexual abuse of a minor made against Fr. Mulloy as a priest of that diocese."

"We grieve with all who have suffered sexual abuse and their loved ones. I ask you to pray for the person who has come forward with this accusation, for Fr. Mulloy, for the faithful of our diocese, and for all affected," he said.

The priest also said the diocese places its "hope and trust in God's providence as we await, again, the appointment of our next bishop."

A statement from the Diocese of Rapid City said it received a notification Aug. 7 of an allegation of sexual abuse against a minor by Fr. Mulloy in the early 1980s. It has not received any other allegations against him.

The statement said that, following diocesan procedures, Bishop Peter Muhich of Rapid City informed law enforcement of the allegation and Mulloy was "directed to refrain from engaging in ministry."

The diocese then commissioned an independent investigation to determine whether the allegation warranted further investigation under canon law, which the diocesan review board determined it did.

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Muhich, who was just ordained bishop of Rapid City July 9, relayed these findings to the Vatican. Mulloy received a summary of the specific allegations against him and submitted his resignation.

The Duluth Diocese has not had a bishop since Bishop Paul Sirba died Dec. 1, 2019, at 59 after a cardiac arrest.

Mulloy, 67, is a native of Mobridge, South Dakota. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, June 8, 1979, and incardinated into the Diocese of Rapid City in 1986 after being on loan to the diocese for a few years for parish ministry.

He has served as the Rapid City diocese's vocations director and director of its Office of Worship. He has also served on its priests' council, college of consultors, diocesan finance and pastoral councils, and the Sioux Spiritual Center Board of Directors.

In 2017, he became vicar general of the diocese and in 2019, he was appointed diocesan administrator when Bishop Robert Gruss was named bishop of Saginaw, Michigan.