News
Vatican



In this Nov. 14, 2011, file photo, then-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick prays during the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' annual fall assembly in Baltimore. (AP File/Patrick Semansky)

by The Associated Press

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

November 10, 2020

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

The Vatican on Nov. 10 released a long-awaited report on what it knew about ex-Cardinal Theodore McCarrick's sexual misconduct during his rise through the church hierarchy.

McCarrick, who was one of the highest-ranking, most visible Roman Catholic officials in the United States, was defrocked by Pope Francis in 2019 after a Vatican investigation determined he sexually abused minors as well as adults.

A number of accusers have come forward in the past two years, and the 90-year-old McCarrick and the various archdioceses where he was stationed are facing lawsuits.

McCarrick denied an initial allegation that led to his removal from public ministry in 2018 — an accusation that he had groped an altar boy in the 1970s. He has not commented on the lawsuits against him, nor did he when he was defrocked last year.

A look at the lawsuits and other settlements involving McCarrick:

___

June 2018: On the same day the Archdiocese of New York announced a credible and substantiated claim of abuse of a minor by McCarrick, the Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey, where McCarrick was a bishop and archbishop, said it was aware of three decades-old allegations against him involving sexual misconduct with adults.

The Newark Archdiocese disclosed that two of those claims had resulted in legal settlements but declined to provide additional details, citing confidentiality concerns. It was subsequently reported that the settlements were made in 2005 and 2007.

Related: Vatican's explosive McCarrick report largely places blame on John Paul II

August 2019: One of McCarrick's accusers, James Grein, filed a lawsuit in New York alleging he told then-Pope John Paul II in 1988 about being sexually abused as a child by McCarrick but the Vatican did nothing.

The lawsuit named the Archdiocese of New York but not McCarrick directly.

The Associated Press does not typically name victims of sexual abuse. AP initially identified Grein only by his first name, but he later agreed to be fully identified and shared postcards and letters McCarrick wrote him.

Grein has said McCarrick was a close family friend and alleges McCarrick abused him over the span of about two decades. He told Vatican investigators that McCarrick began abusing him at age 11, sometimes during confession.

Grein's was one of hundreds of sex abuse lawsuits filed against a wide array of institutions and individuals as New York state began accepting cases once blocked by the statute of limitations.

A spokesman for the Archdiocese of New York said at the time that it would carefully review the claims.

—-

December 2019: A lawsuit filed in New Jersey alleged McCarrick sexually assaulted a teenage boy in the 1990s when he was leader of the Archdiocese of Newark.

Jeff Anderson, the plaintiff's attorney, said at the time that his client's lawsuit was the first to name McCarrick as a defendant.

It also named the Newark Archdiocese, but not Vatican officials. It did, however, allege Vatican officials were aware of McCarrick's behavior yet continued to promote him to ever higher positions.

"He never would have been able to do the things he did and rise up the ranks the way he did without their complicity or consent, implied or otherwise," the plaintiff, John Bellocchio, said at the time.

The diocese said in a statement that it would "continue to cooperate and work with victims, their legal representatives and law enforcement authorities in an ongoing effort to resolve allegations made and bring closure to victims."

Bellocchio also filed a separate federal lawsuit that month against The Vatican, which court records show remains active. A Friday filing in the case said the Holy See had not responded since being served with the suit.



In this Feb. 13, 2013 file photo, Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick poses for a photo in Rome. (AP File/Andrew Medichini)

December 2019: Grein filed a second lawsuit, this time in New Jersey, with allegations similar to the one filed in New York.

He alleges that on a trip to Rome, he waited until McCarrick was out of the room to tell the pope — in the presence of other Vatican officials — about the abuse.

The suit named the Diocese of Metuchen and the Archdiocese of Newark as defendants, alleging gross negligence. It also accused McCarrick of assault, battery and infliction of emotional distress, and sought unspecified damages.

A spokeswoman for the Archdiocese of Newark told AP it would "continue to do all we can to promote the healing of victims, to enact structures of accountability and to provide greater transparency into the activities of the Archdiocese of Newark."

Barry Coburn, an attorney for McCarrick, said he could not comment until he learned more about the case.

___

July 2020: Another lawsuit filed in New Jersey alleged McCarrick and several other clerics sexually abused a teenage boy at a New Jersey beach house in the 1980s.

The suit claimed the youth, who is not named, was first abused at age 11 when he attended Catholic school in Newark and later was chosen to participate in overnight visits to the beach house in Sea Girt, about 50 miles north of Atlantic City.

McCarrick "assigned sleeping arrangements, choosing his victims from the boys, seminarians and clerics present at the beach house," the suit alleged.

An attorney for McCarrick and a spokeswoman for the Newark archdiocese declined comment at the time.

___

August 2020: Geoffrey Downs, a man living in North Carolina, filed a lawsuit in New Jersey alleging that McCarrick sexually abused him when he was 15 or 16 years old.

The abuse occurred at a church while Downs was serving as an altar boy with McCarrick and included physical touching of the boy's genitals, according to the lawsuit.

A year earlier, Downs had attended an altar boy retreat at a diocese beach house and observed another boy being sexually abused by an unknown priest, the lawsuit also alleged.

Downs, who came forward publicly in an effort to help other abuse victims, was interviewed for the Vatican investigation, his attorney Derek Braslow said.

McCarrick's attorney declined comment to news outlets when the lawsuit was filed.

Advertisement

This story appears in the **The McCarrick report** feature series. View the full series.