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A western Kentucky priest [accused of sexually abusing two minors](#) has been reinstated by the Vatican but remains banned from entering schools for five years.

The Diocese of Owensboro announced April 26 that Joseph Edward Bradley could resume priestly duties after the Vatican overrode a 2019 recommendation from the Owensboro bishop that he be permanently [suspended](#), according to the diocese's [statement](#).

Bradley served in leadership roles at Owensboro Catholic High School in the 1980s. His priesthood was suspended in the spring of 2019 after the diocese received two reports accusing him of sexual abuse against a minor stemming from his time at the school.

A review board found the allegations credible and they were formally deemed substantiated after an investigation, according to the diocese.

Bradley's lawyers appealed the suspension to the Vatican, who reinstated him last week, noting in its ruling that Bradley engaged in "imprudent behavior" during his career in education, the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer [reported](#), citing the statement.

Bradley has always maintained his innocence and was never formally charged with any crimes. A prosecutor [decided not to pursue charges](#) against him in October 2019, saying "allegations of criminal contact were not supported by evidence."

Bradley also served as a priest in Henderson from 1995 to 2011 and as the men's basketball teams' chaplain while Rick Pitino was coaching at the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville. Bradley was retired and again working at Owensboro Catholic, this time as a volunteer chaplain, when the allegations emerged.

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