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The Nashville Diocese announced Feb. 9, 2024, that Fr. Juan Carlos Garcia, a former associate pastor at St. Philip Catholic Church in Franklin, Tennessee, has been indicted on multiple sex abuse charges. Garcia is pictured in an undated file photo. (OSV News/Diocese of Nashville)

The Nashville Diocese announced Feb. 9 that Fr. Juan Carlos Garcia, a former associate pastor at St. Philip Catholic Church in Franklin, who was ordained to the priesthood less than four years ago, has been indicted by a grand jury on multiple sex abuse charges.

A Williamson County grand jury indicted the priest on one count of continuous sexual abuse of a child, one count of aggravated sexual battery, four counts of sexual battery by an authority figure and two counts of sexual battery.

The Nashville Diocese removed Garcia from his parish post and from public ministry in January while the Franklin Police Department investigated reports of sexual misconduct. The police began their investigation of Garcia after diocesan representatives contacted the police department to provide information it had received regarding alleged misconduct.

The priest was booked into the Williamson County Jail Feb. 9 on the charges handed down by the grand jury. As of midday Feb. 13, he remained in custody.

Garcia, who was ordained a priest in 2020, was assigned to St. Philip in July 2022. He was associate pastor at St. Rose of Lima in Murfreesboro from the time of his ordination until he was assigned to St. Philip.

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In early November, St. Philip officials reported to the Diocese of Nashville Safe Environment Office that a teen in the parish had made a report of improper touching involving Garcia.

Per diocesan protocols, a report was immediately made by the diocese and St. Philip representatives to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

Under the diocesan Safe Environment Policy, an outside investigator, who is a former FBI agent, was retained by the diocese to investigate the report.

"The Diocese of Nashville Review Board was promptly convened to evaluate information available from the investigation and to advise the bishop," the Feb. 9 statement said. "Pursuant to Review Board recommendation, Father Garcia was removed from active ministry. Further, the investigative report and all available

information were provided to the Franklin Police Department on the diocese's own initiative.

"The investigation continues with the full cooperation of the diocese and its representatives, mindful of the due process accorded to all parties."

The diocese reiterated that any person who reasonably suspects that child sexual abuse has occurred is required by law to make a report to civil authorities. If the suspicion of abuse involves an employee or volunteer in a ministry or parish, a report also should be made to the diocese's safe environment coordinator.

The diocese urged anyone with information regarding Garcia to contact Detective Andrea Clark at the Franklin Police Department by calling (615) 476-2809.

"The diocese provides victim assistance to those who may have suffered abuse by someone in the ministries of the diocese or a parish, no matter how long ago the abuse might have occurred," the statement said.