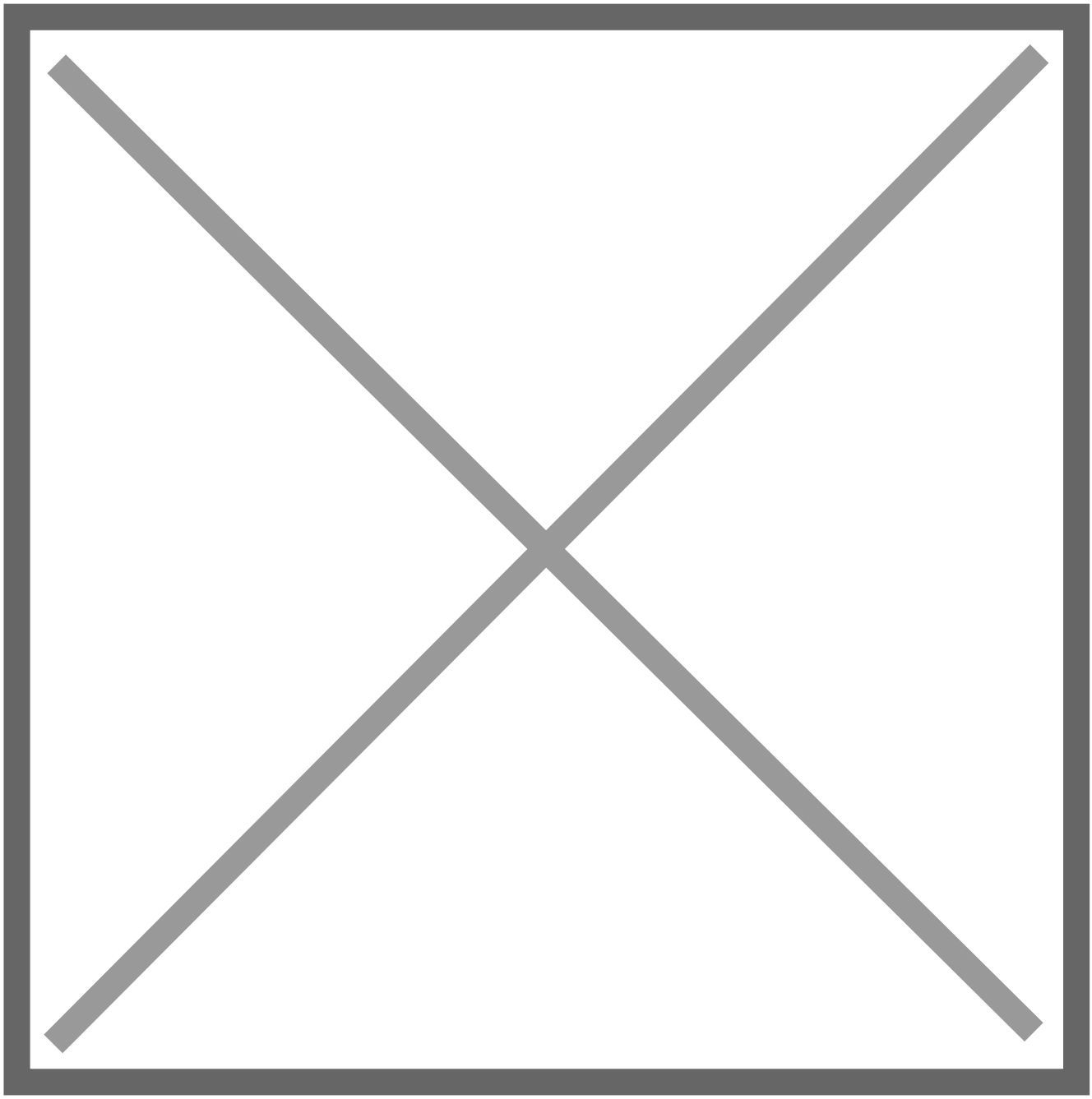
Vatican
Vatican News



Msgr. Carlo Alberto Capella, left, a former Vatican diplomat who served in Washington, talks to his lawyer during his sentencing in a Vatican court in this June 23, 2018, file photo. Msgr. Capella continues to work at the Vatican Secretariat of State as one of several clerks, a July 12 report said. (CNS/Vatican Media)

Junno Arocho Esteves

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

Rome — July 17, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Msgr. Carlo Alberto Capella, a former Vatican diplomat who was convicted of distributing and possessing child pornography, continues to work at the Vatican Secretariat of State as one of several clerks, a report says.

OSV News reached out to the Vatican press office July 14 for a comment on the Italian monsignor's continued employment and also sought comment from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. OSV News is awaiting a response, as neither has issued a statement.

The news of the continued employment of Capella, who was sentenced to a five-year prison term in 2018, was first reported by the Spanish conservative news site InfoVaticana on July 12.

"The Secretariat's decision to re-employ a priest convicted of distributing and possessing child sex abuse images was irresponsible and arrogant," Anne Barret Doyle, co-director of BishopAccountability.org, a watchdog group that tracks abuse cases in the Catholic Church, told OSV News in a July 17 email.

Back in 2021, The Washington Post reported that during his prison term, Capella was allowed to work during the day in the office that sells certificates of papal blessings; however, he was barred from leaving Vatican City. He was presumably released in

2023.

Nevertheless, according to the "Annuario Pontificio 2025," the Vatican yearbook, Capella is listed as a "minutante," a senior clerk or assistant, at the Vatican Section for Relations with States and International Organizations.

Barrett Doyle said Capella's continued employment in the Vatican's diplomatic offices shows that the Roman Curia "continues to minimize sexual crimes against children."

"Employing him isn't an act of mercy — it's an act of recklessness, and it implies contempt for the plea of survivors and Catholics that the church show zero tolerance toward sex offenders," she said.

Born in Carpi, a town in northern Italy, Capella was ordained to the priesthood in 1993 for the Archdiocese of Milan. After studying at the Vatican diplomatic academy in Rome, he entered the Vatican diplomatic service in 2004. He had worked at the Vatican nunciature in Washington since the summer of 2016.

In August 2017, the U.S. State Department notified the Holy See of Capella's possible violation of laws relating to child pornography images, and he was subsequently recalled to the Vatican.

In September of the same year, police in Canada issued a nationwide arrest warrant for Capella on charges of accessing, possessing and distributing child pornography.

Advertisement

"The Holy See, following the practice of sovereign states, recalled the priest in question, who is currently in Vatican City," the Vatican said at the time.

Following an investigation by Vatican prosecutors, a trial was held in 2018. During the trial, Gianluca Gauzzi, the Vatican Gendarme's tech expert who analyzed the Italian priest's phone and computers, testified that he found drawings, photos, and videos depicting "sexual intercourse of all kinds between adults and prepubescent children," between the ages of 13 and 17.

Among the videos, he said, there is also one of "a very young child engaged in explicit acts."

Capella addressed the court, saying that the "mistakes I have made are evident as well as this period of weakness. I am sorry that my weakness has hurt the church, the Holy See, and my diocese. I also hurt my family, and I am repentant."

Calling his possession and distribution of child pornography "a bump in the road in my priestly life," the former Vatican diplomat said he wanted to continue receiving "psychological support."

Roberto Borgogno, Capella's lawyer, asked the court to give the monsignor a reduced sentence, referring to his client's crimes as "a problem" that required intense therapy and not a heavy sentence.

Nevertheless, Judge Giuseppe Della Torre, head of the tribunal of the Vatican City State, sentenced Capella to five years in prison and a $5,833 fine.

After his conviction, the Vatican press office said he would serve his sentence in a Vatican cell located in the building of the Gendarmerie Corps of Vatican City State, as the Vatican police force is formally known.

Barrett Doyle told OSV News that while there might be valid reasons to keep the Italian priest in Vatican City rather than laicizing and releasing him to the public, the Roman Curia "should pay to have Capella closely monitored for the rest of his life."

Nevertheless, she expressed her hope that Pope Leo XIV would make "zero tolerance a reality, and he could start with the case of Msgr. Capella.”

"We urge Pope Leo to immediately order Capella removed from his position. He should also discipline the secretariat officials who approved Capella's hire," she told OSV News.