News



Fr. Carlos Martins, a member of the Companions of the Cross religious community, distributes Communion during a special Mass celebrated in honor of St. Jude the Apostle at St. Jude Church in Mastic Beach, N.Y., Nov. 27, 2023. Fr. Martins, a well-known exorcist and co-host of "The Exorcist Files" podcast, has been cleared of charges stemming from a relic exposition held in November 2024 at a parish in Joliet, Ill. (OSV News/Gregory A. Shemitz)

OSV News

View Author Profile

Lauretta Brown

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

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

August 1, 2025
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A criminal case against a popular evangelist and exorcist was dismissed July 30.

The court order resolved a misdemeanor battery charge that was brought against Fr. Carlos Martins, co-host of "The Exorcist Files" podcast and director of the relics-focused Treasures of the Church ministry, following an incident during a relic exposition held in November 2024 at a parish in Joliet, Illinois.

The July 30 order dismissing the case was provided to OSV News by the Will County State's Attorney's office, which brought the misdemeanor battery charge against Fr. Martins in January.

"The Court has considered of all facts known to it regarding the underlying circumstances of this matter," the order states. "The State's Attorney's Motion for Deferred Prosecution and Nolle Prosequi is granted and this matter is dismissed."

"Nolle prosequi" is a Latin legal term which translates to "not to wish to prosecute" and indicates that the prosecutor or plaintiff no longer wishes to proceed with the charges or lawsuit.

The 12th Judicial Circuit Court of Will County also noted in the order that "the State has confirmed that Fr. Martins has never been charged with a crime, accused of a crime, accused of any allegations of impropriety with minors, nor subject to any form of canonical discipline as a priest." It also stated that Fr. Martins "is in full compliance with all Safe Environment and Child Protection training protocols required by his religious community, the Archdiocese of Detroit, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops."

The order said that the state "has conferred with the alleged victim and complied with all notice and other requirements under the Illinois Crime Victims' Rights Act."

Advertisement

In a July 30 press release, defense attorney Marcella Burke, chairman of Burke Law Group, which represented Fr. Martins, said, "This is exactly the result we were expecting. What he was charged with was simply absurd. This was a case that never should have been brought forward. The court's ruling is a full vindication of Fr. Martins' innocence from the beginning of any and all criminal wrongdoing."

"I am deeply grateful to all who offered their prayers and support during this time," Fr. Martins said in the statement. "I am thankful for the truth coming to light and look forward to resuming my ministry and continuing to preach the Gospel."

Burke Law Group said that "the allegations stemmed from a misunderstanding during a public event in a crowded church, where Fr. Martins, while engaging with a group of students and adults, made a humorous comment comparing his baldness to a student's long hair. The exchange took place in the presence of many witnesses, including clergy, educators, volunteers, and other students. The incident was initially mischaracterized and distorted by multiple news outlets."

The criminal charge obtained by OSV News after it was originally filed by the state's attorney's office in January accused the priest of "knowingly without legal justification by any means made physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with I.K., a minor, in that said defendant placed the hair of I.K. in his mouth."

The charge was a class A misdemeanor in the state of Illinois and could have resulted in up to one year in prison.

According to a Nov. 25 letter from Burke Law describing its version of events around the Nov. 21 incident, around 200 students were present when Fr. Martins, who tends to make jokes about his own baldness as a conversation starter, commented to one of the older students with long hair that they both had "almost the same hairstyle," which drew laughs.

"He then remarked that he also once had long hair like hers, and he joked he would 'floss my teeth with it.' Again, his comment was met with laughter. He then asked

the student, 'Have you ever flossed with your hair?' Laughing, she shook her head, no. He then said, 'Well, you have the perfect length for it,' as he lifted up a lock from her shoulders to show her its length. She giggled along with the others.

"He was building rapport with the students. The student came home and told her Fr. the story," Burke wrote in the letter. The Fr. "apparently, became infuriated by what he heard," and called police, who went to a related relic veneration event and spoke with students, and left without further action.

The parent asked police to return, Burke said, and "insisted" they "charge Fr. Martin with battery, that the police agreed to further investigate."

On Jan. 24, Fr. Martins' religious order, the Companions of the Cross, posted a statement about the misdemeanor charge. They said Fr. Martins "remains entitled to due process, as is any accused" and that the order's members "look upon allegations of misconduct as an urgent matter that requires serious attention."

Companions of the Cross told OSV News July 31 they would issue an additional statement on the matter available in the coming days.

Fr. Martins is listed as a religious extern in the Detroit Archdiocese, which a 2019 news story published by the Detroit Catholic described as his "home base." As of July 31, his status on the archdiocese's website stated "ministry revoked."

The Diocese of Joliet, Illinois, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the matter.