News



Fr. Andrew Showers, director of the Office of Worship for the Diocese of Madison, Wis., and parochial vicar for Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish, had been "taken into custody Aug. 24, 2025, on allegations of child enticement, use of a computer to facilitate a child sex crime, and attempted second degree sexual assault of a child." Father Showers is pictured in a booking photo. (OSV News/Waupaca County Sheriff's Office)

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Madison, Wis. — September 8, 2025
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As previous complaints have emerged about an accused priest recently arrested in an online sting operation, a Wisconsin diocese has said "there is no cover-up."

Bishop Donald Hying of Madison, Wisconsin, issued a Sept. 6 message in both English and Spanish to faithful, saying he was "devastated" and "heartbroken" by allegations against Fr. Andrew Showers, who is now completely restricted from all public ministry and barred from having contact with minors as a police investigation continues.

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The bishop and the diocese also issued statements clarifying their responses to 2021 and 2024 complaints about Showers, which respectively involved a penitent-clergy exchange with a minor during confession and the alleged groping of an adult woman at a public event.

Showers — who had been director of the diocese's Office of Worship and parochial vicar for Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Madison — was arrested Aug. 24 and later charged with child enticement, use of a computer to facilitate a child sex crime, and attempted second degree sexual assault of a child. The charges, all felonies, carry maximum sentences of anywhere from 20 to 40 years, and fines ranging from $50,000 to $100,000.

Police detained the 37-year-old Showers some 120 miles north of the parish, where he had traveled to meet with a person he believed to be a 14-year-old girl named "Abby" — who in reality was an undercover sergeant — following sexually explicit message and image exchanges on Reddit and Telegram.

The Waupaca County, Wisconsin, district attorney's office advised OSV News at the time that a $10,000 bond "was posted right away," and that Showers was free on bond until his initial court appearance Sept. 30.

Hying stressed in his Sept. 6 message — which followed an Aug. 26 letter to faithful regarding the charges — that the diocese "played no part" in providing bail or assistance in his jail release, and that the priest, who is not receiving legal representation from the diocese, "is solely responsible for his criminal legal defense and its related expenses."

In an Aug. 27 message to the faithful, Hying noted that "a complaint about Fr. Showers was made to the diocese by a parent in December 2021," in which "the parent expressed concern about pastoral questions which were asked of a male middle-school child during the Sacrament of Confession."

Hying said the parent had reported those concerns to the Lodi, Wisconsin police department, which determined after interviewing the father and child that "the incident did not rise to the level of a criminal act" and did therefore "not refer the matter further or pursue it with the diocese.

"I apologize that this parental complaint was not included in our initial communications," said Hying in his Aug. 27 message.

In his Sept. 6 message, Hying also addressed an accusation against Showers made public at a Sept. 4 press conference held outside the Wisconsin State Capitol building and jointly organized by abuse survivor advocacy groups Nate's Mission and the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP).

At the event, a young woman named Patricia Moriarty appeared with her father, John, who had reported to the diocese that Showers' alleged groping of his daughter under her clothing at a January 2024 social gathering in Chicago. The priest had also spoken to her in "a sexually inappropriate manner," said SNAP spokesperson Sarah Pearson during the press conference.

A tearful Patricia Moriarty told media she had "made the decision to share my story in hopes that others will feel empowered and encouraged to speak their truth as well."

In his Sept. 6 message to the faithful, Hying — who did not specifically name Moriarty — said that "what she did was very brave, and as a Church, it is important for us to hear these allegations and to take actions to both support victims and prevent abuse."

However, said Hying, "the victim advocacy groups who hosted the press conference, while intending to correct perceived injustices, have painted a scandalous version of events that is simply not true.

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"It is false to state that I or diocesan staff knew of abuse allegations against Fr. Showers and failed to act on information which had been received about him," said Hying in his message.

He included "a full and transparent statement with essential details, supporting documentation, and a clear, accurate timeline of events," adding that the statement "also clarifies that the Diocese had no information upon which it could act concerning the latest allegations."

The five-page media statement, dated Sept. 5, provided the diocese's detailed response to both the 2024 and 2021 allegations.

Regarding the 2024 complaint, the diocese confirmed that it had communicated with John Moriarty by both phone and email, but that Moriarty "would not share essential information with diocesan staff designated to handle allegations, including the name of the priest, the location where the alleged incident occurred, and/or which police department was investigating."

The diocese said, "Had we known that Fr. Showers was the priest in question behind the 2024 allegation, immediate action could and would have been taken."

The media statement also noted that Hying did not call John Moriarty, saying that "once a police investigation has been launched (which Mr. Moriarty said was the case here), the Church's abuse-reporting protocols, which were put in place precisely to preserve the integrity of investigations and protect victims, preclude the bishop from speaking with those who have made allegations."

The diocese said the "important precaution" prevents "any possibility or even suspicion of witness tampering, victim coercion, or potential cover-up," adding that John Moriarty had never shared a promised police report, and that "no law enforcement officials ever reached out to the Diocese of Madison about this incident.

"Without knowing the name of the priest involved, the name of the victim, or even which law enforcement agency was investigating, there was simply no way to pursue this or take corrective action," said the diocese.

That policy is not specifically stated in the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People or the essential norms appended to that document, noted Fr. John Paul Kimes, the Raymond of Peñafort Fellow in canon law at the University of Notre Dame's de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture, and associate professor of practice at the university's law school.

However, Kimes told OSV News in a Sept. 7 email, the practice "has become common in most, if not all, dioceses in the US."

In a message relayed by Pearson, Patricia Moriarty declined to speak directly to OSV News.

Nate's Mission slammed the diocesan response in a Sept. 6 media release as a "textbook example of victim-blaming" and "an abdication of leadership" by Hying.

The diocese also said in its statement that "police concluded that nothing criminal occurred" during the 2021 incident involving Showers.

"In short, what the police report described and what the diocesan review revealed was not solicitation (which, according to Church law, is the crime of a priest seeking sexual contact with the penitent/person going to confession) or inappropriate sexual behavior in the confessional," said the diocese in its media statement. "Rather, questions of a moral nature were asked presumably to help the male teenager make a good and thorough confession."

The police report, quoted by the diocese in its statement, included the topics of masturbation and pornography viewing.

In its Sept. 6 press release, Nate's Mission said it was "disturbed" by that "outrageous" assessment, adding that "in any other setting, a teacher, counselor, or coach initiating sexual conversations with a child would have criminal consequences."

In his Sept. 6 message, Hying urged the faithful "amid these sad days," to "take heart and do not lose faith!"

"In the midst of life's great storms, we know that Jesus is with us in the boat and will lead us to the safe harbor of His consoling love," said Hying.

The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Sept. 4 that, according to a now-deleted Facebook post from the Diocese of Madison's Young Adult Ministry, Showers had been scheduled to lead a 13-person pilgrimage to Italy in March 2026, hosted by Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish in Madison.