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Priest at center of bishop's trial seeks delay in own case

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NCR Today

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- The lawyer representing the priest at the center of the first criminal trial of a bishop in the decades-long clergy sexual abuse crisis has requested the priest's federal trial be delayed.

The priest, Fr. Shawn Ratigan, is charged with 13 federal felony counts relating to the possession and production of child pornography.

Ratigan's bishop, Robert W. Finn, and his diocese, that of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo., face separate criminal trials in a local jurisdiction on charges of suspicion of child abuse, stemming from questions surrounding when they reported Ratigan to police.

The motion for a continuance, filed in federal court today and first reported by *The Kansas City Star*, would delay Ratigan's trial from June until Aug. 27. Assistant Federal Public Defender Robert Kuchar says in the filing that he only recently received some 1,000 pages of material from prosecutors and needs time to study it.

The charges against Finn and the diocese came from prosecutors in Jackson County, Mo., where the diocesan chancery is located. Ratigan also faces separate charges in Clay County, Mo., where his last parish is located.

While Finn and diocesan officials have acknowledged that they were aware that a laptop used by Ratigan contained lewd images of children in December 2010, they did not report the priest to police until May 2011.

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