

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

April 9, 2013 at 3:28pm

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## Three more priests accused of abuse out in Philadelphia

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NCR Today

More than two years after the Philadelphia archdiocese suspended 26 priests accused of sexual abuse or misconduct, the number of cases still pending has reduced to seven.

On Sunday, Archbishop Charles Chaput announced in a statement he had removed from public ministry two priests, Frs. Joseph J. Gallagher and Mark S. Gaspar, because of substantiated violations of the archdiocese's Standards of Ministerial Behaviors and Boundaries.

Gallagher, 78, was accused of molesting altar boys during the 1980s, according to Phillyburbs.com, including Daniel Neill, who committed suicide in 2008 months after the archdiocese told him his claims were unsubstantiated.

The decisions on both priests followed the same path as previous cases: first, a referral to local prosecutors, who after their review released the cases for investigation by the archdiocese's Multi-Disciplinary Team, before review by the Professional Responsibility Review Board and finally a decision by the archbishop.

Both men, who can appeal the decision to the Vatican, were originally suspended by then-Archbishop Justin Rigali in March 2011, a month after a grand jury report criticized the archdiocese for leaving as many as 46 priests in active ministry despite unsettled accusations of sexual abuse or misconduct against them.

When Rigali resigned later that year, Chaput replaced him and inherited responsibility of the fate of the priests on leave. The decisions regarding Gallagher and Gaspar bring the total completed cases to 17, with Chaput ruling on 15 in 2012 -- eight coming at a May press conference.

The removal of Gallagher and Gaspar brings the total removed from public ministry to nine, with eight priests being found suitable to return to ministry. One priest died before a full investigation could proceed, and another was arrested while on administrative leave. Of the seven pending, four remain with the local law enforcement and three were turned over for archdiocesan review in recent months.

Also Sunday, Chaput revealed he had removed a third priest, Msgr. Richard T. Powers, after it was determined he had sexually abused a minor almost 40 years ago. He was not among the 26 priests placed on administrative leave. Rather, his name appeared on an internal document discovered in March 2012 listing priests alleged of abuse.

Powers, 77, was placed on administrative leave at that time as the investigation began. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Powers was accused of sexually abusing a 17-year-old girl while in Venezuela during the early 1970s. He can also appeal his case to the Vatican.

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