



DIOCESE OF DES MOINES

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Allegation of abuse against Father Kenkel substantiated

Priest has been removed from ministry

The Allegation Review Committee for the Diocese of Des Moines investigated an allegation received last fall against Father Leonard Kenkel of decades-old sexual abuse of a minor and found the allegation to be substantiated, meaning there is sufficient evidence to believe that the abuse occurred.

Upon receiving the complaint Sept. 6, 2018, Bishop Richard Pates immediately referred the case to law enforcement and was notified that the allegation was beyond the statute of limitations. Bishop Pates apologized to the victim, who asked for anonymity.

Father Kenkel is retired and in a nursing facility. He is not able to minister. Nonetheless, the bishop has suspended his priestly faculties so he cannot engage in public service.

The diocese encourages anyone with allegations of abuse by clergy to contact their local police department or diocesan Victim Assistance Advocate Sam Porter, with Polk County Crisis and Advocacy. Mr. Porter serves as a 3rd party advocate, he does not work for the diocese. Mr. Porter can be reached at Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov or 515-286-2015. He can assist the person with making a complaint, and with receiving support and counseling services.

The Allegation Review Committee is comprised of a chief of police, a judge, a lawyer, a counselor, a retired teacher, a priest and a deacon.

Father Kenkel was ordained a priest in 1960. He served the following Des Moines parishes: Christ the King, Holy Trinity and St. Peter. He also served St. Boniface Parish in Westphalia, Holy Spirit Parish in Creston and St. Edward Parish in Afton. Father Kenkel taught at Dowling Catholic High School for 27 years, from 1962 to 1989. He retired in 2008.

Two allegations of decades old abuse have previously been made in 2003 and 2005 against Father Kenkel. The Allegation Review Committee determined in both cases there was insufficient evidence to conclude sexual abuse but recommended that Father Kenkel meet with a professional to help him better understand personal space and the recognition of appropriate boundaries for physical contact, which he did.

The Diocese of Des Moines includes 80 parishes in 23 counties in central and southwest Iowa.