

Two Queens Priests On The Job Despite Allegations Of Abuse

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by [Daniel Hendrick](#)

Two Queens priests are still on the job, despite allegations of sexual abuse and a church policy recommendation that they temporarily be reassigned while an investigation is under way.

Father Vincent Gallo, pastor of St. Pancras in Glendale, and Father Hugo Bedoya, at the Immaculate Conception Center in Douglaston, remain at their posts despite being named in a \$300-million civil lawsuit filed last year.

The decision to not reassign the pair appears to contravene a recommendation by the U.S. Conference of Bishops, issued last year, that calls on church administrators to “relieve the alleged offender promptly of his ministerial duties.” That recommendation is apparently being interpreted differently from diocese to diocese.

Frank DeRosa, a spokesman for the Diocese of Brooklyn and Queens, did not return a call for comment but was quoted in published reports as saying that the charges against the two were thus far unfounded.

“It’s an ongoing investigation in terms of studying the allegations and the priests involved,” he said.

Gallo, 69, stands accused of sexually abusing a boy at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish in Bushwick, Brooklyn, while assigned there in the late 1960s.

The suit claims Gallo asked the boy to bring sexually explicit pictures to confession, then watched as the boy masturbated.

Bedoya, who now serves as a judicial vicar for the diocesan marriage tribunal, was initially accused of sexually abusing an altar boy for two years, and accused of examining the genitals of altar boys in a group to make sure they were clean.

An amendment filed last month in Queens State Supreme Court alleges another case against Bedoya, which purportedly took place in Hollis’ St. Gerard Majella Church during the 1970s.

According to the charter of the Conference of Bishops, which was revised after a firestorm of controversy last year, allegations of sexual abuse against a minor undergo a preliminary investigation by church officials. While that is under way, priests are ordinarily asked to step aside.

“The charter and norms require temporary removal from ministry,” Kathleen McChesney, of the conference’s Office for the Protection of Children, told Newsday.

DeRosa told reporters that the diocese had not been informed of any violation of procedure.

Mary Tiernan, a founding member of the Queens Voice of the Faithful chapter, a support group for abuse survivors, said there are many times when abuse allegations are unfounded.

“The Pope advised the bishops not to go the route of no-tolerance, but they did. Now, there are innocent priests who are being accused. They are living in limbo, and not having their day in court,” she said.

Still, Tiernan—whose group was initially banned from meeting on church property—is critical of Catholic bishops’ handling of the abuse scandal.

“I have met many of the victims and they just want to hear the words: ‘I’m sorry,’” she added. The bishops should “come out from behind their lawyers, and meet face to face and ask for forgiveness.”

Voice of the Faithful is expected to meet in Queens next month.

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