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NEWS

Catholic priest pleads not guilty to rape, assault charges on minor

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BARNSTABLE — The Catholic priest charged with multiple counts of rape pleaded not guilty to all charges Monday during his arraignment in Barnstable Superior Court.

Mark Hession was arraigned on charges including two counts of rape, one count of indecent assault and battery on a child less than 14 and one count of intimidation of a witness. He was released after posting \$2,500 cash bail.

Judge Mark Gildea also ordered that Hession's passport be taken away and that he stay away from the complainant. Hession is due to reappear in court for a pretrial conference on Feb. 24.

Hession, who delivered the homily at the funeral for U.S. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy in 2009, was accused of assaulting a child under 14 with the "intent to commit rape and did commit rape upon such person" on multiple occasions between 2005 and 2008 in Barnstable County, according to redacted indictments.

Hession, who was ordained in 1984, has served at 12 different institutions in the Cape and Fall River areas, including St. Patrick Parish in Wareham, St. Joan of Arc in Orleans, Holy Name in Fall River, St. Mary's Parish in New Bedford, Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River, St. Joseph Church in Taunton, Holy Rosary in Fall River, St. Patrick Church in Falmouth, Our Lady of Victory in Centerville, Our Lady of the Assumption in Osterville, Our Lady of Mt. Carmel in Seekonk and Holy Family in East Taunton, according to the Diocese of Fall River's list of publicly or credibly accused religious leaders connected to the diocese.

On Jan. 7, the Fall River Diocese published a list of clergy, diocesan and religious leaders connected to the diocese who have been credibly or publicly accused of committing sexual abuse of a minor. Hession, who was placed on the "publicly accused" list, was among many Cape priests listed.

Bishop Edgar Moreira da Cunha had announced in 2019 the diocese's intention to publish the list.

“To all survivors of child sexual abuse, I am deeply sorry,” da Cunha said in a statement in 2019. “We as a Church failed when you were most vulnerable. I firmly resolve to do all we can to help you heal, make certain we are accountable, and protect our children so that no other child suffers as you have.”

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