

Monsignor Bevan is permanently removed from ministry

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien has permanently revoked Monsignor Thomas Bevan's faculties to function as a priest as a result of what the archbishop called "credible allegations of child sexual abuse made against him."

The longtime former pastor of St. Patrick in Cumberland was first removed as pastor and barred from public ministry in August after two individuals alleged they were abused on a number of separate occasions in the mid-1970s while they were students at St. John School in Frederick and Monsignor Bevan was associate pastor of the parish.

In a letter that was read at St. Patrick's Nov. 21-22 weekend Masses, Archbishop O'Brien said that since the earlier allegations were announced in August, two additional individuals came forward alleging they were sexually abused as children by Monsignor Bevan in the early- to mid-1970s.

Both were students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School in Essex. The priest was then serving as associate pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church.

None of the four alleged victims knew any of the others, according to Archbishop O'Brien's letter. The archbishop noted that Monsignor Bevan has denied all the abuse allegations against him. He has agreed that he will no longer act publicly as a priest, Archbishop O'Brien said.

The decision to remove Monsignor Bevan from ministry marks the conclusion of an archdiocesan investigation into abuse allegations that were first reported to parishioners on Aug. 23.

"I am well aware of the pain and difficulty this news has caused the people of St. Patrick," Archbishop O'Brien said, "and assure you that my prayers and the prayers of all your sisters and brothers in faith are with each of you, as well as with all the victims of child sexual abuse and their families."

Sean Caine, archdiocesan communications director, told The Catholic Review that the victims have accepted the archdiocese's offer of counseling assistance. Such assistance has also been offered to Monsignor Bevan.

The archbishop has asked Father Jay O'Connor, archdiocesan director of clergy personnel, to continue working closely with Auxiliary Bishop Mitchell T. Rozanski to address the pastoral needs of the parish until a new pastor is named.

Caine noted that there will be a consultation process with the parish to select a pastor.

"Finding a new pastor certainly is our pressing issue," he said, "and one will be named as soon as possible."

Caine urged anyone who has knowledge of any child sexual abuse to report it immediately to civil authorities. If clergy or other church personnel are suspected of committing the abuse, call the archdiocesan office of child and youth protection hotline at 1-866-417-7469.