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St. Pius X Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. (Diocese of Tulsa.)

DEC. 5, 2019

## Clergy Sex Abuse Accusation Against Tulsa Priest 'Unsubstantiated'

Father Joe Townsend has been put on administrative leave since the allegation surfaced earlier this year.

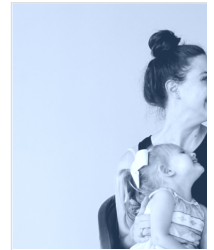
Catholic News Agency

TULSA, Okla. — An accusation that a priest sexually abused a minor during an assignment nearly 30 years ago was “unsubstantiated” and the accused priest may return to ministry, the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma has said after a third-party investigation was completed.

Bishop David Konderla of Tulsa thanked the accused priest, Father Joe Townsend, for “his cooperation and patience during this difficult ordeal.”

The accusation stemmed from his service as associate pastor from June 1988 to June 1991 at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Tulsa.

“After a thorough investigation that was both victim-centered and respectful of the rights of the accused, Bishop Konderla, in agreement with the third-party investigators and in consultation with the Diocesan Review Board, a board of primarily lay persons, has found the



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allegation against Father Townsend to be unsubstantiated," Harrison Garlick, chancellor and in-house counsel of the Diocese of Tulsa, said in a Dec. 3 memorandum.

Father Townsend was put on administrative leave after the allegation in mid-2019. The diocese announced the accusation and asked anyone with possible knowledge to come forward.

The ruling means the priest is removed from administrative leave and may again exercise public ministry in the Tulsa diocese.

Garlick said the priest will enter "a season of healing and rest" and will not be considered for a pastoral assignment until summer 2020.

"The diocese has notified law enforcement of the findings of this investigation and remains committed to cooperating with civil authorities," Garlick said. "Bishop Konderla extends his gratitude to all who participated in this investigation, everyone who came forward to share information, and those who generously kept all involved in their prayers."

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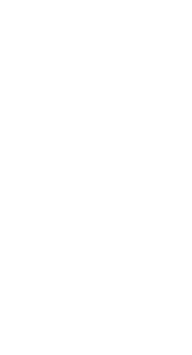
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