



**Statement from Archbishop Zinkula regarding
the 4/24/24 sexual abuse charges brought against Father Leo Riley**

April 26, 2024

On Wednesday afternoon of this week, we learned together that a former priest of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Father Leo Riley, has been charged with five (5) counts of 2nd Degree Sexual Abuse. The charges arise out of allegations of abuse committed by Father Riley while he was in Dubuque during the time-period of 1985 to 1986. These allegations were first brought forward in May of 2023. Under our laws, Father Riley is given a presumption of innocence while the judicial process is completed. We pray for all those involved in that process, with the intention that justice be well served.

Many people are understandably disheartened and hurt in reaction to this news. I want to address these emotions and express my own, while also providing clarity about our efforts to seek justice concerning the allegations against Father Riley.

Father Riley was ordained a priest of the Archdiocese of Dubuque in 1982, and he was an associate pastor and pastor in our parishes for two decades. In 2002, he initiated a request to become a priest of the Diocese of Venice, Florida, to be closer to his aging parents. The request was granted, and he was incardinated in the Diocese of Venice in 2005.

No allegation of sexual abuse was known while he was actively serving our parishes. The first notice of any allegation of abuse by Father Riley was made in December of 2014. The claim related to the time-period of 1985, when Father Riley would have been in Dubuque. Particulars of the allegation were received in February of 2015.

Upon initially receiving the allegation in December 2014, Archdiocesan personnel reported it to the Dubuque County Attorney's Office in accordance with the established policy of the Archdiocese. It is the understanding of the Archdiocese that the Dubuque County Attorney's Office chose not to conduct an investigation into the allegation because the applicable statute of limitations at that time had expired. The Archdiocese also notified the Diocese of Venice, Florida and Father Riley was placed on administrative leave pending the results of the investigation.

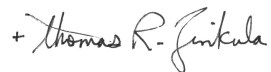
In accordance with policy, the Archdiocese conducted an investigation to determine if the claim could be substantiated. As is often the case, each investigation can pose challenges when relying on the willingness and ability of people to provide information on events that occurred decades ago. The investigation concluded that the best information available at the time did not support a reasonable belief that the allegation was true. The allegation and results of the investigation also were publicized in several media outlets at the time. Subsequently, Father Riley continued to serve as a priest in Venice, Florida and later Port Charlotte, Florida, where he was most recently assigned.

On May 5, 2023, the Archdiocese received a new allegation against Father Riley. The Archdiocese issued a public statement on May 23 and encouraged anyone with information to come forward. On May 23, 2023, another allegation involving Father Riley was received by the Archdiocese. Each allegation is from Father Riley's time ministering in the city of Dubuque between 1985 and 1986. Both allegations were reported to the Dubuque Police Department. The Diocese of Venice, Florida also was notified. Father Riley was again placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of additional investigations. Archdiocesan officials also began an internal investigation into the new allegations, which remains open pending the outcome of the criminal charges.

Various church officials collaborate with me in my role as Archbishop to do all we can to protect minors, prevent sexual abuse, assist with victims' healing, and seek to restore trust. Thankfully, we have made great strides as a Church in each of these areas during the past two decades, and we continually strive to do better.

My heart aches for each victim of sexual abuse and for their family. I am truly sorry when a member of the clergy hurts a child in such a terrible way, instead of providing them with the proper love and guidance that each child inherently deserves. I am hopeful that this week's events will bring about justice and healing.

The Archdiocese is strongly committed to helping all victims of abuse obtain justice. To report past sexual abuse of a person who was abused as a minor but is now an adult by a priest, deacon, employee or volunteer, please call the Archdiocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator (563-552-0280), the Archdiocese of Dubuque (800-876-3546), or the Iowa Attorney General hotline for survivors of abuse (855-620-7000).

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "+ Thomas R. Zinkula". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Most Rev. Thomas R. Zinkula
Archbishop of Dubuque