



## DIOCESE OF FARGO

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**For Immediate Release**

March 8, 2024

An announcement from the Most Reverend John Folda, Bishop of the Diocese of Fargo:

“Neil Pfeifer, formerly a priest of the Diocese of Fargo, received a dispensation from the clerical state (laicization) from Pope Francis, effective March 8, 2024.

The decision to laicize a priest is not made by the local diocese or bishop, but is determined by the Holy See. Laicization means that Mr. Pfeifer has been returned to the lay state and may no longer exercise priestly ministry. As a result, in accord with Canon Law, he may no longer celebrate Mass, hear confessions, or administer other sacraments. Laicization does not invalidate sacraments that he previously administered.

Mr. Pfeifer sought the dispensation after adult women came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct. Mr. Pfeifer pleaded guilty on July 13, 2023 to a misdemeanor charge of sexual assault in Stutsman County.

When members of the clergy or others representing the Church abuse someone, they violate a sacred trust. Please join me in praying for healing for all those hurt in this situation.”

The Diocese of Fargo is steadfast in its commitment to provide safe-environments. If you or someone you know has been sexually abused by a church worker, please report it to the proper authorities. The Diocese of Fargo’s Victim Assistance Coordinator is available at 701.356.7965.

Media inquiries should go to Paul Braun, Director of Communications, at [paul.braun@fargodiocese.org](mailto:paul.braun@fargodiocese.org), or by phone at 806-678-4894.