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## **Diocese: Allegation against Tulsa priest found to be unsubstantiated**

By Kendrick Marshall Tulsa World Dec 4, 2019



The Catholic Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma has announced it has placed Father Joe **Townsend** on administrative leave amid allegations of sexual misconduct with a minor.

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Sexual abuse allegations against a Tulsa priest were found to be “unsubstantiated,” following a seven-month investigation, the Catholic diocese announced Tuesday.

The Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma said the Rev. Joe Townsend has been cleared of **an accusation** of sexual misconduct with a minor.

“After a thorough investigation that was both victim-centered and respectful of the rights of the accused, Bishop (David) 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 allegation against Fr. Townsend to be unsubstantiated,” stated Harrison Garlick, chancellor and attorney for the Tulsa diocese, in a memorandum.

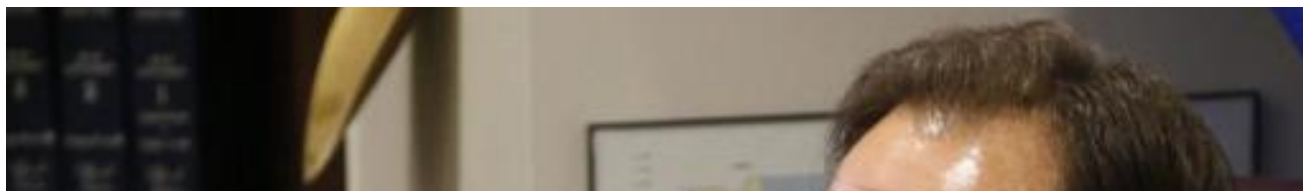
Dave Crenshaw, a spokesman for the diocese, did not provide specific details to the Tulsa World on Tuesday about factors that led to the decision. Crenshaw **referenced a July 5 statement** on The Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma website that outlined the procedural process for investigating claims of sexual misconduct. It included the diocese working with law enforcement to execute “a transparent and cooperative” probe “with all civil authorities.”

The fact-finding review, said Crenshaw, also incorporated an independent investigator not associated with the diocese who spent several weeks questioning individuals regarding the allegations against Townsend.

Townsend was placed on leave in July for what the diocese termed “a non-frivolous allegation” of sexual misconduct with a minor.

The allegations against Townsend stem from his time as an associate pastor at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Tulsa from 1988 to 1991. Townsend was ordained in May 1988.





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According to the Tulsa World archives, Townsend was assigned in 2007 as pastor at St. Benedict Catholic Church in Broken Arrow.

Konderla in the memo thanked Townsend for his “cooperation and patience during this difficult ordeal” in the midst of the investigation.

“Father Townsend is no longer on administrative leave and may again exercise his public ministry as a priest of the Diocese of Tulsa,” Konderla said. “Father Townsend will enter a season of healing and rest and will not be considered for a pastoral assignment until the Summer of 2020.”

The Tulsa Catholic diocese said it has notified law enforcement of its findings and “remains committed to cooperating with authorities.”

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