
Diocese of Buffalo

Office of Communications



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: July 15, 2026

Statement of the Diocese of Buffalo Regarding the Allegations and Arrest of Rev. Jeffrey Nowak

(Buffalo, NY) — In the spirit of transparency and full cooperation with law enforcement authorities, the Diocese of Buffalo wishes to provide the following background concerning the status of Jeffrey Nowak as a suspended priest of the Diocese and further details relating to his removal from active ministry:

In 2019, the Diocese was advised of numerous complaints about Rev. Nowak. None of the complaints included any allegation of inappropriate sexual contact, possession of child pornography or sexual abuse of a minor. However, given clear evidence of inappropriate conduct of Jeffrey Nowak with adults, then-Bishop Richard Malone removed him indefinitely from active ministry in 2019. The Diocese further required Rev. Nowak to engage in professional counseling which he repeatedly failed to do. In 2020, then-Apostolic Administrator Bishop Edward Scharfenberger reviewed Rev. Nowak's circumstances and decided to remove him from the Office of Pastor of Our Lady Help of Christians through a process required by canon law, despite the fact that he was on indefinite leave.

For a brief period, Rev. Nowak resided at the Bishop Head residence for retired priests, however, Rev. Nowak was not a "retired" priest but a priest whose faculties to function as a priest had been indefinitely suspended. Rev. Nowak subsequently moved to his parents' home in Lackawanna.

Following Bishop Michael Fisher's appointment to the Diocese of Buffalo in January 2021, Bishop Fisher personally met with Rev. Nowak, having reviewed details of his removal from active ministry, and informed Rev. Nowak that he would not consider reappointing him to a parish, nor allow him to function as a priest within the Diocese. Bishop Fisher further made clear that he would advise against any other bishop or diocese accepting Rev. Nowak as a priest in their diocese, should he pursue that route. Bishop Fisher encouraged Rev. Nowak to personally seek voluntary removal from the clerical state by the Vatican, a process known as "laicization." As there was no allegation of child sexual abuse or other criminal allegation, the Diocese had no grounds to petition the Vatican to remove Rev. Nowak from the clerical state against his will.

As required by canon law, the Diocese must provide some level of financial sustenance to priests of the Diocese, even if they have been removed from active ministry, though not formally removed from the clerical state. As such, Rev. Nowak was provided a modest monthly stipend, considerably less than what an active priest receives, and also less than what a retired priest receives.

In light of the abhorrent criminal conduct recently alleged by federal investigators, the Diocese is no longer providing any financial support to Rev. Nowak, who remains incarcerated pending his trial. Moreover, Bishop Fisher has now instructed the Diocese's Judicial Vicar to gather the necessary documentation based on these latest allegations to petition the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith to dismiss Jeffrey Nowak from the clerical state.