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Metro

# Lynn priest accused of child sexual abuse

Rev. Gaudreau is on paid leave

By **Matt Rocheleau and Gal Tziperman Lotan** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS    SEPTEMBER 23, 2012

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A Roman Catholic priest who has worked at a church in Lynn for the past three decades has been placed on paid administrative leave because of an accusation of sexual abuse of a child, the Archdiocese of Boston announced Sunday.

The Rev. James E. Gaudreau, 69, arrived at Saint Joseph Parish in 1984 as the Spanish apostolate for the Lynn area and became the church's pastor in 1993, archdiocese spokeswoman Kellyanne Dignan said by phone.

The alleged abuse occurred in 2006, but the archdiocese was notified only recently, Dignan said. Gaudreau was placed on leave Friday. Dignan declined to release the age of the child or other details.

Archdiocese officials said they have notified police about the case and have launched an investigation. Lynn police declined to comment.

“We are committed to the protection of children and young people in our parishes and institutions,” Cardinal Sean P. O’Malley said in a statement.

Parishioners who were headed to Sunday evening Mass, which is said in Spanish, expressed shock at the allegation.

“It’s something nobody will believe until they have proof,” said Wilson Cruz, 70, who has belonged to the parish for several years.

Cruz stood outside the large, red-brick church. The building towers over Union Street, which is lined with businesses that, like the church, post signs in both English and Spanish.

According to city records, the church was built around 1890. Around the block are a parish center and a rectory. A religious education center shares space with a convent in another building.

“We don’t want to believe it’s true,” said Cruz. “That would be something too bad for this city, something bad for this community.”

Cruz described Gaudreau as someone who is always looking for ways to help others.

“I’m 70 years old and I know many people, and for me, he’s one of the good people,” Cruz said. “I hope they are false allegations.”

Parishioner Sonia Diaz said she has known Gaudreau for 30 years. “Father Gaudreau — never, never,” she said, expressing her shock.

The archdiocese has not yet announced who will take over the pastor’s duties during his leave, Dignan said.

Gaudreau serves as a board member for the Catholic Schools Foundation Inc., Dignan said.

Asked whether he will continue working in that role while he is on leave, she said that his leave means that “he has no public ministry. He cannot present himself as a priest or say Mass.”

She said Gaudreau also worked on a Spanish-language newspaper, La Vida Catolica, which the Boston Archdiocese launched in 2000 in an effort to reach out to growing Hispanic populations in the area.

The Globe has reported that Gaudreau served as editor of the paper. According to Dignan, the newspaper ceased publication in 2003.



Gaudreau was ordained at Holy Cross Cathedral in Boston in May 1969, she said. He was assigned to St. Patrick Parish in Roxbury until 1975, when he was assigned to Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Chelsea, according to Dignan. He worked there for nine years before moving to the Lynn parish.

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