

Our Thinking: Press Releases

Related Attorneys

Martin D. Gould

Antonio M. Romanucci

Related Practice

Clergy Abuse

Minor Child Abuse

Sexual Abuse & Hazing

Settlement Reached with the Diocese of Joliet for Sexual Abuse of Young Boys

August 29, 2018

Personal injury law firm, Romanucci & Blandin, announced the settlement of a lawsuit today for \$1.4 million dollars against the Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet on behalf of its clients, three males who endured repeated sexual abuse and molestation by their priest, Father Leonard Mateo (Mateo), between 1980 and 1982. At the time of the abuse, all victims were under the age of 11-years-old.

In a deposition, former Bishop Joseph Imesch (now deceased) admitted to allowing numerous priests with credible sexual abuse allegations to continue ministry within the Diocese of Joliet without any warning to parishioners. Defendant Diocese attempted to dismiss Plaintiffs' case on a statute of limitations argument, arguing that the time expired for these victims to pursue justice in the court. The Will County Circuit Court denied Diocese's motion, finding that sufficient allegations were pled establishing that the Diocese fraudulently concealed its own culpability in assigning, retaining or sheltering pedophile priests and specifically Father Mateo until 2014 when his 122-page secret file was released to the public. If the Diocese actively dissuaded victims from coming forward and presented false narratives that the abusive priests such as Father Mateo were just an aberration, as alleged, such allegations were sufficient to circumvent the statute of limitations.

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet has had numerous recent lawsuits filed against it in regards to Father Mateo's conduct spanning decades and the Defendant's role in covering up the sexual abuse of children. "This is a priest who was continuously moved from one parish to the next upon allegations of sexual misconduct, normalizing his sexual abuse of children and dispelling any notion it was wrong," said lead plaintiff's attorney, Antonio M. Romanucci, Principal and Partner at Romanucci & Blandin, LLC. "By actively concealing and turning a blind eye to this wildly inappropriate behavior, the Diocese of Joliet was playing an active role in the abuse of Mateo's victims."

"Tragically, this case fits into a larger narrative the Roman Catholic Church is battling right now upon hundreds of victims of sexual misconduct by priests over several decades coming forward and sharing their own stories of abuse," added associate attorney, Martin D. Gould of Romanucci & Blandin, LLC. "Our plaintiffs were just a few of the countless, unsuspecting child victims of Mateo who was a known pedophile."