

November 27, 2025

For immediate release:

[St. Cloud, Minnesota] Bishop Patrick Neary, C.S.C., of the Diocese of St. Cloud was notified Wednesday, Nov. 26, 2025, that Father Joseph Herzing, a priest of the diocese, was charged in Stearns County with one count of stalking, one count of third-degree criminal sexual conduct and three counts of threats of violence, all involving one adult.

Bishop Neary has placed Father Herzing on leave immediately from his ministry at Christ the King in Browerville, St. Joseph in Clarissa, St. Joseph in Grey Eagle, St. Mary of Mount Carmel in Long Prairie, and St. John the Baptist in Swanville, and prohibited him from all public ministry, pending the outcome of the judicial process. The diocese is cooperating with civil authorities.

Bishop Neary has named Father Arlie Sowada, a retired priest of the diocese, as parochial administrator of the affected parishes.

In October 2022, diocesan leadership was made aware of potential inappropriate behavior between Father Herzing and an adult. At that time, there was no indication of physical or sexual misconduct. Then-Bishop Donald Kettler met with Father Herzing and immediately placed him on administrative leave to undergo a comprehensive professional evaluation. Father Herzing then entered and completed a residential treatment program.

Upon completion of treatment, after multiple conversations and input from the diocesan leadership team, legal counsel and the diocesan victim assistance coordinator, along with considering the recommendations of the residential team, Bishop Neary, who took office as bishop in February 2023, made the decision to return Father Herzing to active ministry in June 2023 with limited responsibility as parochial vicar in Cold Spring, Rockville, Richmond and Jacobs Prairie while continuing his recovery treatment plan. Restrictions and monitoring were put in place.

In June 2024, Father Herzing was appointed as pastor of Christ the King in Browerville, St. Joseph in Clarissa, St. Joseph in Grey Eagle, St. Mary of Mount Carmel in Long Prairie, and St. John the Baptist in Swanville.

In September 2024, Bishop Neary was informed that a report was made to authorities related to the concerns raised in 2022 and that an investigation was underway. The bishop allowed Father Herzing to continue as pastor while remaining under restrictions and monitoring.

When Bishop Neary was alerted of the criminal charges on Nov. 26, 2025. Father Herzing was immediately placed on full administrative leave.

Father Herzing was ordained to the priesthood June 5, 1999, at St. Mary's Cathedral in St. Cloud. He has served the following assignments:

St. Stanislaus Kostka, Bowlus; St. Edward, Elmdale; Holy Cross, North Prairie; and St. Mary, Upsala from July 1999 to July 2001; Pastor in Solidum of St. Mary, Holdingford; St. Hedwig, Holdingford; Immaculate Conception, St. Anna; from July 2001 to July

2005; Pastor in Solidum of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Opole; and St. Columbkille, St. Wendel; from July 2001 to July 2005; Pastor of Holy Cross, Harding; and St. John Nepomuk, Lastrup; from July 2005 to August 2005; Pastor of Holy Cross, Butler; and St. Henry, Perham; August 2005 June 2012; Pastor of St. Stanislaus, Perham August 2005 to October 2009; Pastor of Holy Family, Belle Prairie; and Our Lady of Lourdes, Little Falls; June 2012 to June 2018; Pastor of St. Mary, Little Falls; July 2014 to June 2018; Pastor of Christ Church Newman Center, St. Cloud; June 2018 to June 2023; Pastor of Holy Spirit, St. Cloud; and St. Anthony, St. Cloud; June 2020 to June 2023; Parochial vicar of St. Boniface, Cold Spring; St. James, Jacobs Prairie; Sts. Peter and Paul, Richmond; Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Rockville; from June 2023 to June 2024; and pastor of Christ the King, Browerville; St. Joseph, Clarissa; St. Joseph, Grey Eagle; St. Mary of Mount Carmel, Long Prairie, and St. John the Baptist in Swanville from June 2024 to November 2025.

Bishop Neary remains committed to transparency, accountability and the protection of all involved.

"We have a responsibility to protect the safety and dignity of every person. My commitment is to ensure that our response is clear and rooted in care for all those affected. We will continue to cooperate fully with authorities and accompany our communities with honesty and compassion."

Bishop Neary asks the faithful to join him in prayer and encourages all victims of abuse to come forward to civil authorities or diocesan victim advocates.

Contact information for victim advocates and county officials to whom abuse can be reported is available online at: <http://stcdio.org/about/safe-environment/how-to-report-abuse>.

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For questions, please contact communications director Kristi Anderson at Kristi.anderson@gw.stcdio.org.