

St. Louis Catholic Priest Indicted on Child Pornography Charge

A federal grand jury indicted a Catholic priest in St. Louis on Wednesday on child pornography charges involving Internet images of a boy under the age of 18, in the latest sex accusation to rock the Church.

William Vatterott, 36, was charged with possession of child pornography, according to the indictment released by the U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Missouri. He faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000, if convicted.

The indictment is the latest in a series of abuse accusations to hit the U.S. Catholic Church over the past two decades. The scandals have cost the Church billions of dollars in settlements and driven prominent dioceses into bankruptcy.

U.S. Attorney Richard Callahan said the Archdiocese of St. Louis cooperated with the investigation.

The archdiocese placed Vatterott on administrative leave in June 2011 when it first learned of the allegations, according to a statement it issued on Wednesday. Vatterott was also accused of an incident involving underage drinking and inappropriate behavior, the archdiocese said at the time.

Vatterott had served as pastor of St. Cecilia Parish since 2008, according to the archdiocese.

The case comes after Kansas City priest Shawn Ratigan pleaded guilty last August to producing child pornography. In September, Bishop Robert Finn of the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph was convicted of a misdemeanor charge of failing to

report suspected child abuse when he did not report that Ratigan had the pornographic images.

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