

LONG ISLAND**LI priest steps down after abuse allegations surface, diocese says**

St. Agnes Cathedral, the seat of the Diocese of Rockville Centre, on Oct. 5, 2017. Credit: Danielle Finkelstein

By Bart Jones

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A Long Island priest accused of sexual abuse two decades ago is stepping away from his duties after new allegations against him surfaced, the Diocese of Rockville Centre said Friday.

The Rev. Brian J. Brinker, 61, is accused of sexual abuse of a minor, said diocesan spokesman Sean Dolan. The alleged abuse occurred from 1993 to 1997, though Dolan declined to say where or under what circumstances.

Brinker could not be reached for comment Friday. He was cleared of the earlier allegations, Dolan said.

Most recently, Brinker had been a chaplain at Our Lady of Consolation Nursing and Rehabilitative Care Center in West Islip, Dolan said.

Brinker agreed with diocesan officials that he should no longer serve while the new allegations are investigated, Dolan said. Dolan didn't say how long the investigation would take.

The diocese has notified the Nassau County district attorney, Dolan said. The district attorney's office confirmed that it is aware of the allegations and is asking anyone else who may have been abused to come forward, a spokesman said.

The new allegations surfaced as part of the diocese's Independent Reconciliation and Compensation Program, or IRCP. People who were victims of clergy sex abuse when they were minors receive money if

their case is confirmed through the program’s independent review. They must agree not to sue the diocese.

Brinker was the target of a complaint in 1996, which is separate from the IRCP allegation, Dolan said. That allegation was investigated and presented to the Diocesan Review Board in January 2003, Dolan said, and the district attorney knew about the allegation.

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“While the review board found that Father Brinker had exercised questionable judgment in his interactions with the youth in question, they found no evidence of sexual abuse,” Dolan said.

In that case, the family of a then 14-year-old Farmingdale boy alleged that Brinker inappropriately touched the boy when the two took a trip to California. In a hotel,

Brinker allegedly invited him to watch pornographic movies and made other questionable comments, the family said.

The diocesan announcement comes one day after the New York State attorney general subpoenaed all eight Roman Catholic dioceses in the state as part of an investigation into clergy sexual abuse of minors.

Last month, the Pennsylvania state attorney released an explosive grand jury report detailing the alleged sexual abuse of at least 1,000 children by about 300 priests over 70 years.

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