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PRESS RELEASE

Priest Arrested for Possession and Dissemination of Child Pornography

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced the arrest of Mark Haynes, a priest assigned to Saints Simon & Jude Parish in Westtown Township, Chester County, PA. The defendant was charged with multiple counts of sexual abuse of children for possessing and disseminating child pornography.

District Attorney Hogan stated, "Every person who possesses child pornography is violating the rights and dignity of these young victims. Every person who disseminates child pornography is continuing the cycle of depravity that makes children around the world vulnerable. No matter whether you are rich or poor, young or old, clergy or layperson, the possession of child pornography will lead to arrest, shame, and jail."

The defendant is 55 years old. His residence was Saints Simon and Jude Rectory, 8 Cavanaugh Court in Westtown Township. The defendant served as Parochial Vicar at Saints Simon & Jude since September 3, 2013. He was ordained in Philadelphia on May 18, 1985. The defendant had been assigned by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia to serve in parishes located in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery counties. Since 1985, the defendant has been assigned to eight different parishes, including: St. Ann, Phoenixville; Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Doylestown; St. John of the Cross, Roslyn; Our Lady of Good Counsel,

Southampton; St. Pius X, Broomall; Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Morton; and Annunciation B.V.M., Havertown.

The allegations of the criminal complaint are as follows:¹

Chester County Detective Joe Walton is the investigator in this case. Detective Walton received information from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (“NCMEC”) that an Instagram account was disseminating photographs including child pornography. Instagram is a social media site that allows users to publish and share photographs.

The investigation in this case revealed that the user name on the account was “Katie.” Under the name “Katie,” the user had posted two photographs of a female child under 14 years old. One photograph was of the child posing nude. The other photograph was a close-up of the child’s vaginal area.

Detective Walton traced the Instagram account to the email account “irishwit2@gmail.com.” That email account subscriber information was registered to SS Simon and Jude, 8 Cavanaugh Ct., West Chester, PA.

Initially suspecting that the account might belong to a student at the parish school, Detective Walton interviewed the pastor at Saints Simon and Jude Parish. The pastor was fully cooperative and identified the user of the email address as Rev. Mark Haynes, a parish priest who resides at the rectory.

During a follow-up portion of the investigation, Detective Walton confirmed that the defendant had posted the child pornography to Instagram. Detective Walton also discovered that the defendant had received and posted a multitude of other images of child pornography and had been exchanging lewd emails with a still-to-be-identified 14 year old girl. The defendant had been posing as a 16 year old girl in these exchanges.

The defendant’s electronic devices were seized and are being reviewed. The investigation to identify the 14 year old girl is ongoing.

The defendant has been charged with felony counts of Sexual Abuse of Children -- Child Pornography and Criminal Use of a Communication Facility.

¹ A criminal defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

The defendant's bail was set at \$200,000 (10%) by Magisterial District Justice Thomas Tartaglio. The defendant was committed to Chester County Prison after failing to post bail. The parish immediately excluded him from the parish property when the crimes were discovered. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the parish have been fully cooperative with law enforcement authorities.

District Attorney Hogan added, "This investigation is ongoing. Given the number of parishes to which the defendant was assigned and his close proximity to children, we are concerned that other victims are out there. Anybody with information should come forward immediately."

This case was investigated by the Chester County Detectives. Deputy District Attorney Deborah Ryan from the District Attorney's Child Abuse Unit has been assigned to prosecute the case.

Anybody with information should call Chester County Detective Joseph Walton at (610) 344-4625.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan