

MICHIGAN: Pastor in Dearborn suspended after arrest on suspicion of drunken driving - in the nude

Written by Jennifer Dixon, Detroit Free Press
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{lang: 'en-GB'}



The pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Dearborn was suspended Monday after the Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit learned he had been arrested on suspicion of drunken driving -- in the nude.

The archdiocese issued a statement Tuesday saying the Rev. Peter Petroske, 57, had been placed on administrative leave.

A knowledgeable city source told the Free Press that Petroske was arrested early Friday about a block from the church on Michigan Avenue in Dearborn, and had a laptop computer with him in the vehicle.

His blood-alcohol level was just over the limit at which someone can be convicted of drunken driving in Michigan, the person said.

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Dearborn Police Chief Ronald Haddad declined to comment, saying the matter was under investigation.

The archdiocese statement said that when Petroske was arrested, he was alone in his vehicle and "was charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and indecent exposure. Archdiocesan officials met with parish staff on Monday."

Archdiocese spokesman Joe Kohn said the leave is indefinite. He said he could not discuss the laptop but confirmed that Petroske was not dressed at the time of the arrest.

Kohn said Petroske conducted mass on Sunday and that the archdiocese learned about his arrest that night. Kohn said Petroske then "fully cooperated" with the diocese.

With 1,900 member families, Sacred Heart Parish is Dearborn's second-largest Catholic church. Petroske has been pastor since 2008. The parish also operates a school.

Church members said they were shocked by the news about their pastor, a native of Frankfurt, Germany, who was orphaned at a young age. Following his ordination in the Diocese of Marquette in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, his first assignment was as associate pastor at St. Anne in Escanaba.

According to his biography on Sacred Heart's website, Petroske ended up driving 70 miles a weekend to offer mass in four different UP communities.

His first assignment in the Detroit Archdiocese was in 1991 at St. Rene Goupil in Sterling Heights. He also served at St. Anne in Warren and St. Pius X in Southgate before arriving in Dearborn four years ago.

"He's been just a fantastic pastor, an inspiring speaker. Obviously something very strange must have occurred," said Ned Nikodem of Dearborn, a former vice chairman of the church's Pastoral

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Council. "He has just a devout appreciation for the liturgy and scripture, and he can interpret it in ways that make it moving and meaningful."

Nikodem said he belongs to four choirs at Sacred Heart, including one that performs at funerals. And although families of the deceased may often choose the same readings, he said Petroske always found a way to make those words fresh.

"He has always been able to bring new insight," and Petroske "finds some extra insight that you hadn't considered before," Nikodem said.

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