

Two pastors accused in Child Victims Act claims placed on leave

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Two pastors in active ministry who were accused in a sexual abuse lawsuit filed Wednesday have been placed on administrative leave, the Diocese of Buffalo announced Thursday.

Monsignor Peter Popadick, pastor of St. Aloysius Gonzaga Church in Cheektowaga, and the Rev. Paul Nogaro, pastor of St. Stephen's Church on Grand Island, have been placed "on administrative leave for investigative purposes" by Bishop Richard Malone, the diocese said in a written statement.

A one-year "look-back" window opened at 12:01 a.m. Wednesday under a new state law that gives abuse victims a year to file child sexual abuse claims that previously were prohibited from moving forward in court because of the statute of limitations. About 114 Child Victims Act lawsuits were filed Wednesday in five Western New York counties under the law.

A lawsuit filed by an Erie County man in his 60s accuses Popadick and Nogaro, along with two other priests and two lay teachers at St. Mary of Sorrows Church and School in Buffalo, of raping and molesting him when he was 10 or 11 years old. Popadick, 74, who served as secretary for former Bishop Edward D. Head, declined to comment Wednesday. Nogaro, 74, denied the allegations.

"I don't know who is accusing me, but I absolutely deny it because I have never done this to anyone in 48 years as a priest," Nogaro told The Buffalo News on Wednesday. "Even though the truth is on my side, this destroys my life. ... This supposedly happened more than 50 years ago. I don't think it is fair that someone can make an accusation like this against you without even using their name."

Popadick worked as secretary to Head for more than 20 years when Head was the bishop.