

"If he saw and stayed silent—he's not a good priest;" Activist says inaction over Providence H.S. sex abuse disqualifies Pope hopeful Prevost

By Will County Gazette reports
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Could-be Pope and south suburbanite Rev. Robert Prevost bears responsibility for allowing former Providence Catholic H.S. President and priest Richard McGrath to stay at the high school amidst sex abuse allegations that dated back to the 1990s.

That's according to Eduardo Lopez de Casas, a clergy abuse survivor and national vice president of the **Chicago-based Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP)**.

Lopez de Casas says Prevost, **a Dolton native who directly oversaw New Lenox Providence Catholic in leadership roles for the Midwest Augustinians from 1998 to 2014**, covered up for McGrath, allowing him to prey on students for more than a decade before his ouster in 2017.

"With Prevost, we definitely do not want to enter into another situation where there is a cardinal that becomes pope that has bad things in their closet," Lopez de Casas told the *Will County Gazette*. "Because that is like a

thorn in the side of every survivor every time that happens. Survivors worldwide—many of whom struggle with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), addiction and daily pain—should not have to watch men responsible for cover-ups climb to the top of the Catholic Church.”

“People say, ‘Not all priests are bad,’” he said. “Sure, but I ask, what do you mean by good? If a priest knew about (McGrath's) abuse and said nothing—if he saw and stayed silent—he’s not a good priest. That’s complicity.”

SNAP recently launched a "Conclave Watch" **initiative** to highlight candidates for the Papacy it says have covered up sexual abuse. They include Prevost, who **currently lives in Rome and holds the most senior rank in the Roman Catholic College of Cardinals.**

“Each one of these cardinals is responsible for over a million Catholic souls,” Lopez de Casas said. “If a priest covered something up and then still became a cardinal—that is not acceptable. Just like I tell people, a priest doesn’t have to touch a child to be bad. If he stayed quiet while others did, that’s bad.”

“In any other organization—schools, the Boy Scouts, law enforcement—if someone’s involved in a cover-up, they’re removed,” he said. “But in the Catholic Church, these people keep moving up the ladder. And that’s unique. It’s part of why the Church is in such decline. People are watching. And they don’t want their children exposed to this.”

"Cardinal Prevost endangered the safety of the children attending St. Thomas the Apostle"

In March, **SNAP sent a letter to Vatican leadership** detailing the conduct of Prevost in two separate incidents of priest sexual abuse, demanding an investigation ahead of the looming Conclave.

The letter details accusations of "inaction" during his time both as an Augustinian provincial in the U.S. and as Bishop of Chiclayo in Peru, where Prevost served from 2014 to 2023.

The letter alleged that Prevost allowed known sex abusers to remain in ministry, and failed to investigate serious claims brought by victims, including

three **Peruvian** minor girls who said their reports were ignored and mishandled.

It also details the case of Fr. James Ray, a priest accused of sexual abuse in Waukegan and Wauconda who Prevost allowed to **live** at St. John Stone Priory in Hyde Park, a half block from St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic School.

"As the Archdiocese of Chicago had already placed restrictions on Ray being in the company of minors for nine years prior to his residence at St. John Stone Priory and communicated these when seeking approval from the Provincial, Robert Prevost, Cardinal Prevost was aware of the danger that Ray posed to minors when he gave approval," the letter says. "Nonetheless, Ray was permitted to live at the Priory in the vicinity of an elementary school without informing the administration of the school. By doing so, Cardinal Prevost endangered the safety of the children attending St. Thomas the Apostle."

Former Providence President and Principal McGrath, who worked at the school from 1985 until 2017, when he was removed after a student reported seeing a nude image of a boy on his phone, **was also allowed to live at St. John Stone Priory.**

The Augustinian Province paid one former Providence student, Robert Krankvich, **\$2 million in 2023 to settle allegations McGrath** raped him in the 1990s.

Krankvich died on May 1 at age 43.

A 2025 **report** by Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) found that the Catholic Church in the U.S. spent more than \$5 billion between 2004 and 2023 on allegations of sexual abuse of minors.

The report documents 16,276 credible allegations during that period, most involving abuse that began before 1980.

As the conclave is set to begin on May 7, Lopez de Casas said he is optimistic.

"The people are waking up," he said. "They understand what's been going on. It's time for the Church to catch up. It's time for the conclave to make the right choice—for survivors, for children, and for the future of the faith."

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