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# Diocese of Trenton priest charged with engaging in sexual conduct with teenage boy

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**By [Cristina Rojas](#) | [For NJ.com](#)**

A Diocese of Trenton priest who served in two Trenton parishes, including St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral as recently as 2012, was arrested today on charges he engaged in sexual conduct with a teenage boy earlier this year, authorities announced.

The Rev. Romannilo “Nilo” Apura, 67, was taken into custody around 11 a.m. at the St. Martha Parish rectory in Point Pleasant, where he serves as pastor, by detectives from the Mercer County Prosecutor’s Office’s Special Victims Unit.

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Apura allegedly molested the 16-year-old boy in a home in Trenton in late spring or early summer, the prosecutor's office said. A second incident occurred in June, when Apura attempted to remove the same boy's pants, the office said. Authorities did not say how Apura knew the boy.

Apura is charged with second-degree endangering the welfare of a child, third-degree aggravated criminal sexual contact and fourth-degree attempt to commit criminal sexual contact.

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He is being held at the Mercer County Correction Center in lieu of \$100,000 cash or bond bail. As conditions of bail, the judge ordered that Apura surrender his passport and have no contact with the victim or any other children.

The Trenton Diocese received the allegations Monday and immediately reported them to the prosecutor's office, prompting an investigation. In a statement, the diocese said this is the only complaint it has received about Apura.





The Rev. Romannilo Apura, 67, was taken into custody Aug. 21, 2014 on charges he engaged in sexual conduct with a teenage boy. (Courtesy of Mercer County Prosecutor's Office)

Bishop David M. O'Connell has suspended Apura, effective immediately, pending the outcome of the investigation by law enforcement and recommendations from the Diocesan Review Board, the diocese said.

The suspension prohibits Apura from celebrating Mass publicly, wearing priestly garb or presenting himself as a priest, the diocese said.

Apura has served as pastor of St. Martha Parish since July 2012. Before that, he served at St. Mary of the Assumption Cathedral in Trenton from June 2007 to July 2012. He also served at St. Joachim in Trenton from November 1991 to July 1995. Apura's other parishes were Our Lady of Good Counsel, Moorestown; St. Maximilian Kolbe, Toms River; St. Agnes, Atlantic Highlands; and St. Ann, Keansburg.

At St. Martha's late this afternoon, the parish's business manager, Nancy Dormanski, declined to comment.

"They're just allegations," she said.

Kevin Shea, a parishioner at St. Martha since 2005, said he has worked with Apura on parish ministries and that nothing in his words or deeds would have led him to believe that Apura would be accused of such allegations.

"This is a stunner," he said. "Father Nilo has brought a greater sense of community to our parish and, in my opinion, has been nothing but a positive influence for St. Martha's. The words 'innocent until proven guilty' come to mind very strongly

right now.”

One employee who asked not to be identified said he was working in the side of the church around 11:15 a.m. when he heard detectives approach the rectory across the street where the the pastor lives and greet him by saying, "Good morning, Father Nilo."

Moments later, the employee said, a parishioner told him Father Nilo was led away in handcuffs.

"I was pacing all day thinking what it could be," the employee said.

Then he heard it on the news, he said.

Tonight the church was preparing to host a training course for those affiliated with religious organizations on how to appropriately interact with children.

"Sexual abuse committed by anyone representing the Church is a sin against God and His people, and a betrayal of the trust placed in the Church by families," the diocese said. "We reiterate our firm commitment to the safeguards and initiatives in place to keep our children safe, and we ask the faithful throughout the Diocese to pray for all who may have been harmed in this case."

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Anyone with information on the case should contact the prosecutor's Special Victims Unit at (609) 989-6568.