

# Philippine bishop assures cooperation in probe into alleged rape case involving priest

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*Mug shot of Father Conrado Mantac courtesy of Radyo Bandera Sweet FM*

**A central Philippine bishop assured civil authorities that he and his diocese will cooperate in the investigation into allegations that one of his priests raped a 17-year-old girl in the city of Sagay, Negros Occidental province.**

"I sincerely convey my utmost assurance to fully cooperate with the civil authorities and to properly observe the legal process of our Judicial System for the truth to come out and for justice to be served accordingly," read a statement released by Bishop Gerardo Alminaza of San Carlos on March 28.

The prelate said the news about the arrest of Father Conrado Mantac "pains me and the whole Diocese of San Carlos." He said the diocese has been "consistent in our teachings and advocacy against any form of sexual abuse of children, women and vulnerable persons."

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"Such crimes committed by any person, and especially priests or religious cannot be tolerated," said Bishop Alminaza. "This is a grave crime which contradicts the office of the priesthood," he said.

Father Mantac, 62, of Looc town in Romblon province, was arrested in a village in Bacolod City on Monday, March 27, for charges of the alleged rape of a 17-year-old choir girl in the city of Sagay in 2022.

The priest, also known as Father Con, who was denied bail by the judge, is currently under the custody of the police of Sagay City.

Father Mantac was assigned to the Most Holy Rosary Parish in Sagay and was under preventive suspension from the Diocese of San Carlos after Bishop Alminaza received the complaint in December.

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In his statement, Bishop Alminaza said he and the diocese “commit to provide the needed information openly and honestly to the public without reservations” on the priest’s case.

He also assured the alleged victim and her family of support and protection and “to treat them with dignity and respect, and must offer them welcome, attentive hearing and support, also through dedicated services, as well as spiritual, medical and psychological help, as required by the specific case.”

“I deeply feel the suffering of the victim and her family and entrust her to the rightful agency which can provide proper care and assistance, said the bishop.

He said that as “the father of our priests in the diocese, I also take confidence with the words of Father Mantac that he will face the allegations filed against him.”

“We also recognize his right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty and thus support him in his efforts to establish his innocence in court,” said Bishop Alminaza.

He said all ministries with regard to the priest’s pastoral duties in the diocese are suspended. “The church will also proceed with its own canonical process accordingly,” said the prelate.

He asked everyone “to keep their judgments as we await the proper disposition by the court.” The bishop also asked for prayers for the priest and the alleged victim, “as well as to show them care.”