

[News](#)



Former Washington Archbishop, Cardinal Theodore McCarrick listens during a press conference in Washington, May 16, 2006. The defrocked Roman Catholic cardinal who became the face of the church's clergy sex abuse crisis has been charged in Wisconsin with sexually assaulting an 18-year-old man more than 45 years ago, court records show. (AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite, File)

HARM VENHUIZEN

[View Author Profile](#)

Associated Press/Report for America

[View Author Profile](#)

[**Join the Conversation**](#)

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. [Learn more](#)

Madison, Wis. — April 17, 2023

[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

The defrocked Roman Catholic cardinal who became the face of the church's clergy sex abuse crisis has been charged in Wisconsin with sexually assaulting an 18-year-old man more than 45 years ago, court records show.

A criminal complaint filed April 14 alleges that Theodore McCarrick, who was removed from the priesthood in 2019 after a Vatican investigation found he had sexually molested adults and children, fondled a man in 1977 while staying at a cabin on Geneva Lake in southeastern Wisconsin.

The alleged victim, who is not named, told investigators that McCarrick had repeatedly sexually assaulted him since he was 11 and even brought him to parties where other adult men sexually assaulted him, according to the complaint.

McCarrick became the highest-ranking Roman Catholic official in the U.S. to face criminal charges for sexual abuse when he was accused in 2021 of sexually assaulting a teenage boy in Massachusetts at a wedding reception in 1974. His attorneys asked the judge in that case earlier this year to dismiss the charges, saying that McCarrick, now 92 and suffering from dementia, is not competent to stand trial.

Advertisement

The once-powerful priest was ordained in 1958 and became archbishop in Newark, New Jersey, in 1986 and then archbishop of Washington, D.C., in 2000. He rose to power despite church officials' knowledge of accusations against him. A two-year Vatican investigation into McCarrick's tenure found credible reports of his problematic behavior dating back to 1999, including an inquiry confirming that McCarrick had slept with seminarians.

The church has confirmed it made financial settlements with adults who accused McCarrick of sexual misconduct. McCarrick retired in 2006 but continued to be active in political circles until he was defrocked by Pope Francis in 2019.

Wisconsin prosecutors learned of the alleged 1977 assault through a program dedicated to prosecuting instances of abuse by faith leaders, according to a news release. Officials were able to charge McCarrick because the statute of limitations does not apply to people who are not residents of the state. A similar law allowed Massachusetts prosecutors to bring their case against McCarrick more than 40 years later.

McCarrick's attorney in Massachusetts, William Fick, did not immediately return a phone call or email sent Monday. An attorney for McCarrick has not yet been listed in the Wisconsin case.