

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF TENNESSEE
AT NASHVILLE**

MILES JEFFERIES,)
)
 Plaintiff,)
)
 v.)
)
 THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF) CIVIL ACTION NO. _____
 NASHVILLE; ST. PAUL THE)
 APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH; ST.)
 PAUL THE APOSTLE SCHOOL; THE) 12 PERSON JURY DEMAND
 DIOCESE OF METUCHEN; THE)
 DIOCESE OF TRENTON; JOHN)
 DOES 1-10; AND, JOHN DOE CORPS)
 1-10.

Defendants.

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Miles Jefferies, for his Complaint against the Catholic Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, St. Paul the Apostle School, the Diocese of Metuchen, the Diocese of Trenton, John Does 1-10, and John Doe Corps 1-10, states as follows:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. A document from the Vatican was uncovered that outlines a policy for the “strictest” secrecy in dealing with cases of clergy accused of sexual abuse and threatens those who speak out with excommunication. Bishops were instructed to pursue clergy sexual abuse cases “in a most secretive way” and “restrained by a perpetual silence[.]” This document (hereinafter

referred to as the “1962 Vatican document”) was sent to all bishops across the globe by Pope John XXIII in 1962.¹

2. The Catholic Church has engaged in a practice of priest shuffling where priests accused of abuse are moved around. In an investigation across 21 countries, the Associated Press found thirty cases of priests accused of abuse who were transferred or moved abroad. Many of the transferred priests had access to children in another country, and some abused children again.²

3. Instead of addressing the problem of clergy abuse, the culture of the Catholic Church has been to cover up sexual abuse committed by clergy and shuffle around any problematic priests accused of abuse. This case involves Defendants that fell in line with this entrenched culture within the Catholic Church. This is a case of religious institutional negligence that enabled and even created the perfect environment for a priest to sexually abuse a vulnerable child.

4. This claim arises from childhood sexual abuse that Plaintiff suffered while he was under the care and control of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and St. Paul the Apostle School in Tullahoma, Tennessee. The abuse that Plaintiff suffered was at the hands of Father Frank Iazzetta, the head priest of Defendant St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and the headmaster of Defendant St. Paul the Apostle School, at the relevant time.

5. Father Frank Iazzetta used his position as head priest and headmaster to sexually abuse Plaintiff when he was a minor child.

6. Based on information and belief, Father Frank Iazzetta was shuffled around to various Catholic churches, including at least one other church within the Diocese of Nashville

¹ Antony Barnett, *Vatican told bishops to cover up sex abuse*, THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 16, 2003), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/aug/17/religion.childprotection>.

² *Predator Priests Shuffled Around the Globe*, CBS NEWS (April 14, 2010), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/predator-priests-shuffled-around-globe/>.

prior to his assignment at St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church, until he ended up as the priest for St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church.

7. Based on information and belief, prior to his assignments in Tennessee, Father Frank Iazzetta had assignments in the state of New Jersey at local parishes, churches, camps, and schools that were owned, operated, managed, and/or controlled by the Diocese of Metuchen and the Diocese of Trenton.

8. Based on information and belief, none of his assignments at any Catholic church lasted for longer than two years.

9. Based on information and belief, Defendants had knowledge of sexual abuse of minors by Father Frank Iazzetta, which was the reason that he was transferred from parish to parish over and over again.

10. Despite knowing that clerical sexual abuse was rampant across *all* religious circles at this time and knowing that Father Frank Iazzetta was being passed around by various parishes, Defendant St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and School implemented zero policies, procedures, or safeguards to protect the children invited under their care nor did they properly train their leaders on prevention of child sexual abuse. As a result, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and School was the perfect venue for a predator like Father Frank Iazzetta to abuse Plaintiff.

11. Defendant Diocese of Nashville is equally responsible for the abuse, as it had governing authority over St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church during the time in question and was responsible for retaining, training, and supervising its bishops, priests, and deacons.

12. Based on information and belief, Defendants Diocese of Metuchen and Diocese of Trenton are also responsible for the abuse, as they were on notice and had knowledge about Father Frank Iazzetta's abuse of minors within the parishes, churches, and schools that they owned,

operated, managed, and/or controlled while he was their employee or agent in advance of his transfer to Tennessee assignments.

13. Based on information and belief, Defendants Diocese of Metuchen and Diocese of Trenton did not notify the Diocese of Nashville of their knowledge that Father Frank Iazzetta had abused minors within the parishes, churches, and schools that they owned, operated, managed and/or controlled while he was their employee or agent.

14. Plaintiff files this case to seek remedy for the gross, reckless, willful, and wanton failures to protect him from a sexual predator that resulted in lasting psychological and physical injuries.

II. JURISDICTION AND VENUE

15. This Court has jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1332 as the amount in controversy exceeds \$75,000 and is between citizens of different states.

16. Venue is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in this judicial district.

III. THE PARTIES

17. Mr. Jefferies (“Mr. Jefferies” or “Plaintiff”) is an adult citizen and resident of Florida.

18. Defendant Catholic Diocese of Nashville (“the Diocese of Nashville”) is an unincorporated religious association and non-profit whose principal office is at 2800 McGavock Pike, in Nashville, Tennessee.

19. At all times relevant, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church (“St. Paul Church”) is an unincorporated religious association located at 304 W Grizzard St, Tullahoma, TN 37388.

20. St. Paul the Apostle School (“St. Paul School”) is an educational institution no longer in operation, but at all times relevant, had a principal office in Tullahoma, Tennessee, located at 304 W Grizzard St, Tullahoma, TN 37388.

21. At all times relevant, St. Paul Church and St. Paul School were owned, operated, and controlled by the Diocese of Nashville.

22. At all times relevant, Defendant Diocese of Metuchen (“the Diocese of Metuchen”) was a Roman Catholic diocese with its principal office and place of business located in Middlesex County, New Jersey.

23. At all times relevant, Defendant Diocese of Trenton (“the Diocese of Trenton”) was a Roman Catholic diocese with its principal office and place of business located in Mercer County, New Jersey.

24. To the extent the Diocese of Nashville was a different entity, corporation, or organization during the period of time during which Father Iazzetta used his position as a priest and chaplain to sexually abuse Plaintiff, such entity, corporation, or organization is hereby on notice that it is intended to be a defendant in this lawsuit and is identified in the Complaint as the Diocese of Nashville, or as a “John Doe” or “Doe Corp” defendant.

25. To the extent the Diocese of Trenton was a different entity, corporation, or organization during the period of time during which Father Iazzetta used his position as a priest and chaplain to sexually abuse Plaintiff, such entity, corporation, or organization is hereby on notice that it is intended to be a defendant in this lawsuit and is identified in the Complaint as the Diocese of Trenton, or as a “John Doe” or “Doe Corp” defendant.

26. To the extent the Diocese of Metuchen was a different entity, corporation, or organization during the period of time during which Father Iazzetta used his position as a priest

and chaplain to sexually abuse Plaintiff, such entity, corporation, or organization is hereby on notice that it is intended to be a defendant in this lawsuit and is identified in the Complaint as the Diocese of Metuchen, or as a “John Doe” or “Doe Corp” defendant.

IV. THE FACTS

A. ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH, ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE SCHOOL, AND THE DIOCESE OF NASHVILLE

27. St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church is a member church of the Diocese of Nashville. Upon information and belief, St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church was a member of the Diocese of Nashville during the time of the events described herein.

28. Upon information and belief, St. Paul the Apostle School was governed and operated by St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and the Diocese of Nashville.

29. The Diocese of Nashville exercises authority over its affiliated churches through an established governance structure. The Diocese of Nashville is a hierarchical organization led by a bishop who exercises authority over its parishes, clergy, and administrative offices.

30. The Diocese of Nashville has authority to revoke a member church’s affiliation, to take disciplinary actions against its affiliated churches, to issue guidance, resources, and policies that directly affect the day-to-day functioning of affiliated churches, to train affiliated church’s leadership, and to oversee affiliated churches.

31. At all relevant times, the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, held Father Iazzetta out to the public, to Plaintiff, and to his parents, as their agent and employee.

32. At all relevant times, the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, held Father Iazzetta out to the public, to

Plaintiff, and to his parents, as having been vetted, screened, and approved by the Defendants as someone who was safe and could be trusted with children.

33. At all relevant times, Plaintiff and his parents reasonably relied upon the acts and representations of the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, and reasonably believed that Father Iazzetta was an agent or employee of the Defendants who was vetted, screened, and approved and who was safe and could be trusted with children.

34. Based on the representations of the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church that Father Iazzetta was safe and trustworthy, Plaintiff's parents allowed Plaintiff to be under the supervision of, and in the care, custody, and control of, the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, including when Plaintiff was sexually abused by Father Iazzetta.

B. PLAINTIFF ATTENDS ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND SCHOOL

35. During the events described herein, Plaintiff was a minor, with the events taking place when he was approximately six to ten years old. Plaintiff is now 40 years old.

36. Plaintiff began attending St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church with his family when he was approximately five years old.

37. Plaintiff attended St. Paul the Apostle School from the approximate time when he was in kindergarten until the halfway point of his year in third grade.

38. At all times relevant, Father Frank Iazzetta was on the staff of, was an agent of, and served as an employee of St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and St. Paul the Apostle School.

39. At all times relevant, Father Frank Iazzetta was acting in the course and scope of his employment with St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and St. Paul the Apostle School.

40. The Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church, and St. Paul School each knew or reasonably should have known of Father Frank Iazzetta's sexual abuse of minors before, during, and after he abused Plaintiff. Based on this knowledge, Defendants knew or should have known that Father Frank Iazzetta was unfit as a head priest and headmaster.

C. FATHER FRANK IAZZETTA SEXUALLY ABUSES PLAINTIFF WHILE UNDER THE CARE AND CONTROL OF DEFENDANTS

41. The sexual abuse of Plaintiff occurred while he was under the care and control of Defendant St. Paul Church and Defendant St. Paul School.

42. Father Frank Iazzetta was the head priest and headmaster of St. Paul Church and St. Paul School, respectively.

43. During the time that Plaintiff was approximately 6-10 years old, Father Frank Iazzetta sexually abused him.

44. The sexual abuse of Plaintiff by Father Frank Iazzetta included but is not limited to fondling, molestation, oral sex, and penetration of the anus by small objects such as a battery.

45. The abuse occurred in the vestibule located at the back of St. Paul Church, in the sacristy of St. Paul Church, the rectory where Father Frank Iazzetta resided at St. Paul Church, and in Father Frank Iazzetta's office at St. Paul School.

46. Based upon information and belief, the abuse continued after Father Frank Iazzetta was moved elsewhere to a different assignment, as he would still often visit and conduct mass at St. Paul Church.

47. Father Iazzetta's sexual abuse of Plaintiff occurred during activities that were sponsored by, or were a direct result of activities sponsored by the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, including (i) school activities when Father Iazzetta worked at St. Paul School and Plaintiff was a student of the school, (ii) when Father Iazzetta was the head priest of

St. Paul Church and Plaintiff was a member of the church, and (iii) after Father Iazzetta departed from his official assignment at St. Paul Church, when he returned to St. Paul Church to conduct mass and Plaintiff was a member of the church.

D. DEFENDANTS ALLOWED AND ENABLED ABUSE

48. When a church, school, and diocese invite children under their care, they owe a duty to protect and supervise those children.

49. During the time of the events described herein, Defendants knew sexual predators were drawn to involvement in activities with easy access to children, especially within religious settings.

50. Defendants knew that children are among the most vulnerable in our population.

51. Based upon information and belief, Defendants knew or should have known of Father Frank Iazzetta's tendency and propensity for the conduct which caused injury to Plaintiff, particularly that Father Frank Iazzetta had a propensity to sexually abuse minors, given his history of being transferred from church to church without staying at any one assignment for more than two years.

52. Indeed, Father Frank Iazzetta is the subject of ongoing litigation in New Jersey for abusing male students at a catholic church and high school in Metuchen, New Jersey, owned, operated, managed, and/or controlled by the Diocese of Metuchen and the Diocese of Trenton.

53. At all relevant times, it was reasonably foreseeable to Defendants, through their agents, servants, and employees, and at a minimum because of their knowledge of Father Frank Iazzetta being transferred around various catholic parishes over and over again, that Father Iazzetta would abuse children at St. Paul Church and St. Paul School.

54. At all relevant times, Defendants knew or should have known that Father Frank Iazzetta was unfit, dangerous, and a threat to the health, safety and welfare of the children entrusted to Father Frank Iazzetta's counsel, care, and protection.

55. The Diocese of Metuchen and the Diocese of Trenton, through their agents, servants, and employees knew or should have known that Father Iazzetta was sexually abusing children entrusted to their care and that he was likely to continue doing so at other assignments.

56. The Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their agents, servants, and employees knew or should have known that Father Iazzetta was sexually abusing children, including Plaintiff.

57. At all relevant times it was reasonably foreseeable to Defendants, through their agents, servants, and employees that Father Iazzetta's sexual abuse of children would likely result in injury to other children by Father Iazzetta.

58. The Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, consciously and recklessly disregarded their knowledge that Father Iazzetta would use his position with Defendants to sexually abuse children, including Plaintiff.

59. Defendants did not train or educate their priests, deacons, and staff on child abuse or the prevention of child abuse.

60. The Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, acted in concert with each other and/or with Father Iazzetta to conceal the danger that Father Iazzetta posed to children, including Plaintiff, so that Father Iazzetta could continue serving them despite their knowledge of that danger.

61. The Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul School and St. Paul Church, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, knew that their negligent, reckless, and outrageous conduct would inflict severe emotional and psychological distress, as well as personal physical injury, on others, including Plaintiff, and Plaintiff did in fact suffer severe emotional and psychological distress and personal physical injury as a result of their wrongful conduct.

62. Defendants' acts and omissions created the perfect environment for a sexual predator like Father Frank Iazzetta to abuse children.

63. But for Defendants' acts and omissions, Father Frank Iazzetta never would have abused Plaintiff.

E. CONCEALMENT OF ABUSE

64. At all relevant times, based on information and belief, the Diocese of Nashville, Diocese of Metuchen, and the Diocese of Trenton (the "Dioceses"), through their respective agents, servants, and employees, knew that their clergy, who were under the supervision and control of the Dioceses, were sexually abusing children in the course of their ministry and in their educational and pastoral functions.

65. At all relevant times, the Dioceses knew that this was a widespread and systemic problem in the Catholic Church, involving many clergymen and victims.

66. The 1962 Vatican document reinforced that the Catholic Church and its agents to whom the document was directed had knowledge that there was a systemic problem of Catholic clergy sexually abusing children.

67. In 1963, Fr. Gerald Fitzgerald, founder of the Servants of the Paraclete, an order with a mission to serve troubled priests, warned Pope Paul VI in a letter of the dangers of keeping priests who had sexually abused children in active ministry roles. Because of the recidivism rate

that Fr. Fitzgerald witnessed among abusive priests, he put down a \$5,000 downpayment on a Caribbean Island with the intent of using it as a place to isolate such offenders because he was convinced that completely isolating these priests was the only solution.³

68. Fr. Fitzgerald's reports were kept secret under the Catholic Church's standing policy of avoiding scandal at all costs. His recommendation was ignored, and instead the Catholic Church continued to return known offending priests to active ministry. At this point, it is clear that the Catholic Church and its agents, including the Dioceses, knew they had a widespread problem of clergy sexually abusing minors.

69. The Catholic Church's policy of secrecy under penalty of excommunication created a shroud of secrecy insulating clergy from consequences. Through this policy and others, the Catholic Church and its agents, including the Dioceses, knowingly allowed, permitted, and encouraged child sex abuse by their clergy.

70. Upon information and belief, the transfers and reassessments of accused clergy by the Catholic Church and its agents were designed to conceal sexual abuse by clergy and to protect themselves from scandal.

71. The Dioceses were in the best position to protect against the risk of harm as they knew of the systemic problem and foreseeable proclivities of its clergymen to sexually abuse children.

72. At all relevant times, while the Dioceses had special and unique knowledge of the risk of child sexual abuse by its clergymen, Catholic families trusted clergy to have access to their children.

³ Tom Roberts, *Pope was warned in '63 of abusive priests*, NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER (April 1, 2010), <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-was-warned-63-abusivepriests>.

73. Plaintiff and those similarly situated had no opportunity to protect themselves against a danger that was solely within the knowledge of the Dioceses.

74. Children engaging in Catholic activities were in this manner placed at risk of child sexual abuse. Because of the culture in the Catholic Church of strict secrecy regarding child sexual abuse by clergy, Plaintiff's parents were misled to believe that Plaintiff would be safe when with clergy.

75. As a result of the foregoing secrecy and deceit, Plaintiff's parents trusted the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church, and St. Paul School and continued Plaintiff's involvement with church-related activities.

F. LASTING TRAUMATIC EFFECT ON PLAINTIFF

76. Plaintiff has been clinically diagnosed with a severe case of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder as a direct result of the abuse suffered at the hands of Father Frank Iazzetta.

77. Plaintiff's severe and persistent symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder include re-experiencing the trauma regularly, avoidance of the trauma, overly negative thoughts and views about himself, hyperarousal, and other negative life experiences.

78. Plaintiff's injuries could have been avoided but for Defendants' acts and omissions.

G. TIMELY CLAIM

79. Plaintiff started seeing a psychologist in November of 2024 and received a formal diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from this same psychologist on May 7, 2025. It was during this psychological evaluation that Plaintiff discovered that his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and other mental injuries were caused by the childhood sexual abuse he experienced by Father Frank Iazzetta. His claim is therefore timely pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. § 28-3-116.

V. CAUSES OF ACTION

COUNT ONE: NEGLIGENCE

(Against the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church, and St. Paul School)

80. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 79 as fully set forth herein.

81. Defendants had a duty to take reasonable steps to protect Plaintiff, a minor, from foreseeable harm when he was in their care, custody, and control.

82. During the time that Father Frank Iazzetta was working for and serving Defendants, Defendants had a duty to use reasonable care to prevent Father Iazzetta from using the tasks, premises, and instrumentalities of his position with each Defendant to target and sexually abuse children, including Plaintiff.

83. As Defendants' employees came into close contact with vulnerable and defenseless children as part of their duties, Defendants had a duty to implement a monitoring, training, and supervision system for their staff that would protect minors from predators.

84. Defendants breached the foregoing duties by failing to use reasonable care to protect Plaintiff from Father Frank Iazzetta, which allowed him to sexually abuse Plaintiff.

85. But for Defendants' failure to exercise reasonable care, Plaintiff would not have been sexually abused by Father Frank Iazzetta.

86. Because Defendants' acts and omissions were wanton and reckless, and that recklessness proximately caused the Plaintiff's damages, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against Defendants under Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-104. The Tennessee cap on damages does not apply pursuant to *Lindenberg v. Jackson Nat'l Life Ins. Co.*, 912 F.3d 348, 364 (6th Cir. 2018).

87. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' negligence, Plaintiff has suffered and continues to suffer pain and suffering, pain of mind and body, emotional distress, physical

manifestations of emotional distress, loss of self-esteem, loss of enjoyment of life, post-traumatic stress disorder resulting in re-experiencing the trauma on a daily basis, avoidance of the trauma, overly negative thoughts and views about himself, hyperarousal, and other negative life experiences. Plaintiff was prevented and will continue to be prevented from performing Plaintiff's daily activities and obtaining the full enjoyment of life and has sustained and continues to sustain loss of earnings and earning capacity.

COUNT TWO: NEGLIGENCE
(Against the Diocese of Metuchen and the Diocese of Trenton)

88. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 87 as fully set forth herein.

89. The Diocese of Metuchen and the Diocese of Trenton had a duty to take reasonable steps to notify other dioceses, particularly dioceses to which Father Frank Iazzetta was subsequently transferred like the Diocese of Nashville, of the sexual abuse of minors committed by Father Frank Iazzetta while he was under their authority and supervision, which would protect other minors, like Plaintiff, from foreseeable harm.

90. The Diocese of Metuchen and Diocese of Trenton breached the foregoing duty by failing to notify the Diocese of Nashville about the misconduct by Father Frank Iazzetta, which allowed him to sexually abuse Plaintiff.

91. But for the Diocese of Metuchen and the Diocese of Trenton's failure to exercise reasonable care, Plaintiff would not have been sexually abused by Father Frank Iazzetta.

92. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' negligence, Plaintiff suffered damages for which he is entitled to recover as provided by law.

COUNT THREE: NEGLIGENT HIRING, RETENTION, AND SUPERVISION
(Against the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church, and St. Paul School)

93. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 92 as fully set forth herein.

94. Defendants owed Plaintiff a duty of care to investigate, suspend, or terminate Father Frank Iazzetta from the day-to-day operations of St. Paul Church and St. Paul School once they knew or should have known of the danger Father Frank Iazzetta posed to its minor constituents and was unfit for his duties as head priest and headmaster.

95. Despite having actual and/or constructive knowledge of the danger Father Frank Iazzetta posed to Plaintiff and others, Defendants recklessly disregarded this serious risk by retaining Father Frank Iazzetta and failing to supervise him, which directly resulted in Plaintiff suffering abuse at the hands of Father Frank Iazzetta.

96. Prior to the last instance of Father Frank Iazzetta abusing Plaintiff, Defendants knew, or in the exercise of reasonable care should have known, that Father Frank Iazzetta was unfit for the duties assigned to him, including spending time alone with minors like Plaintiff.

97. The Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church and St. Paul School, breached their duty of care by failing to report Father Frank Iazzetta to authorities and by allowing Father Frank Iazzetta to continue working, and having access to Plaintiff and other minor constituents.

98. By failing to report Father Frank Iazzetta to authorities and by allowing him to continue working, and having access to Plaintiff and other minor students, despite having knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect that child sexual abuse had occurred prior to the last instance of Father Frank Iazzetta sexually abusing Plaintiff, Defendants authorized, ratified, and/or approved of Father Frank Iazzetta's abusive conduct with knowledge and/or conscious or reckless

disregard that Father Frank Iazzetta's conduct would result in the serious mental and physical harm suffered by Plaintiff.

99. Because Defendants' acts and omissions were wanton and reckless, and that recklessness proximately caused the Plaintiff's damages, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against Defendants under Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-104. The Tennessee cap on damages does not apply pursuant to *Lindenberg v. Jackson Nat'l Life Ins. Co.*, 912 F.3d 348, 364 (6th Cir. 2018).

100. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' negligent hiring, retention, and supervision, Plaintiff suffered damages for which he is entitled to recover as provided by law.

COUNT FOUR: VICARIOUS LIABILITY AND/OR RESPONDEAT SUPERIOR
(Against the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church, and St. Paul School)

101. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 100 as fully set forth herein.

102. Upon information and belief, at all times relevant, Father Frank Iazzetta was an employee and/or agent of Defendants.

103. Upon information and belief, at all times relevant, Father Frank Iazzetta was acting within the course and scope of his employment or agency with Defendants.

104. Upon information and belief, at all times pertinent to this Complaint, Father Frank Iazzetta was acting in furtherance of the interests of Defendants. In addition, Father Frank Iazzetta's exposure to St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Church and School's minor constituents and students, including Plaintiff, as a priest and headmaster was in connection to and in furtherance of his duties as an employee and agent of Defendants.

105. Defendants are therefore liable under the doctrines of *respondeat superior*, vicarious liability and/or statutory employer liability for the reckless, tortious acts and/or omissions of its employees and/or agents.

106. Father Frank Iazzetta's exposure to, meeting of, and relationship with Plaintiff was solely in connection to and in furtherance of his duties as an employee and agent of Defendants.

107. At the time Father Frank Iazzetta sexually abused Plaintiff, he was utilizing St. Paul Church and St. Paul School's premises.

108. At all times relevant herein, Father Frank Iazzetta was an agent acting within the course and scope of his roles as an employee of Defendants and was supervised in this role by Defendants; therefore, Defendants are liable for his negligent acts under a theory of respondeat superior and/or agency.

109. Because Father Frank Iazzetta was employed in a management capacity in his roles as head priest and headmaster of St. Paul Church and St. Paul School, respectively, and he was acting within the scope of employment when he sexually abused Plaintiff, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against Defendants under at least Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-104(g)(1)(A).

110. Because Defendants were reckless in hiring, retaining, supervising, and training of Father Frank Iazzetta as an agent and/or employee, and that recklessness proximately caused the Plaintiff's damages, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against Defendants under at least Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-104(g)(1)(B).

111. Because Defendants, through their respective agents, servants, and employees, authorized, ratified, or approved Father Frank Iazzetta's actions with knowledge or conscious or reckless disregard that his actions may result in Plaintiff's injury, Plaintiff is entitled to punitive damages against Defendants under Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-104(g)(1)(C).

COUNT FIVE: NEGLIGENT INFILCTION OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS
(Against the Diocese of Nashville, St. Paul Church, and St. Paul School)

112. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 111 as fully set forth herein.

113. Defendants had a duty to take reasonable steps to protect Plaintiff, a minor, from foreseeable harm when he was in their care, custody, and control.

114. Defendants breached their duties to Plaintiff by failing to use reasonable care to protect him from Father Frank Iazzetta, including by continuing to retain and by neglecting to supervise Father Frank Iazzetta. This gave him access to and allowed him to sexually abuse Plaintiff.

115. As a direct and proximate result of Defendants' negligence, Plaintiff has suffered and continues to suffer severe emotional injuries, including pain and suffering, pain of mind and body, emotional distress, physical manifestations of emotional distress, loss of self-esteem, loss of enjoyment of life, post-traumatic stress disorder resulting in re-experiencing the trauma on a daily basis, avoidance of the trauma, overly negative thoughts and views about himself, hyperarousal, and other negative emotional experiences.

VI. PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests the following relief:

1. Entry of judgment in favor of Plaintiffs and against Defendants as applicable and for each of the above Counts;
2. An award of reasonable attorney's fees, expenses, pre-judgment interest, post judgment interest, and costs;
3. An award of economic damages in an amount to be determined by a jury at trial that includes but is not limited to, out-of-pocket expenses incurred as a result of Defendants' behavior, loss of income, loss of future earnings and earning capacity, and past and future medical bills;

4. An award of noneconomic damages that includes loss of enjoyment of life and pain and suffering in an amount to be determined by a jury at trial;
5. An award of punitive damages against each Defendant in an amount to be determined by a jury at trial;
6. Entry of a ruling that the cap on punitive damages does not apply pursuant to *Lindenberg v. Jackson Nat'l Life Ins. Co.*, 912 F.3d 348 (6th Cir. 2018), or in the alternative, Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-104;
7. Entry of a ruling that the cap on noneconomic compensatory damages does not apply for the same reasons under *Lindenberg v. Jackson Nat'l Life Ins. Co.*, 912 F.3d 348 (6th Cir. 2018), or in the alternative, Tenn. Code Ann. § 29-39-102(h);
8. Entry and award of such other and further relief the Court deems just and proper.

VII. JURY DEMAND

Plaintiff requests trial by a twelve-person jury for all issues, claims, and defenses so triable.

DATED: January 9, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

HB ADVOCATES PLLC

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