



Media Statement from Fr. Robert Abbatiello, OFM Cap.

The Province of St. Mary of the Capuchin Order

Fr. Paul Bielecki, a Capuchin friar, was arrested on Saturday, August 17, and has been charged with one count of wire fraud and one count of mail fraud.

The Capuchin Franciscan Friars are a worldwide order of Catholic priests and brothers, and we firmly believe that no one should violate the public trust -- first and foremost, a member of the Church. This is why our Province reported Fr. Paul's suspicious behavior to the US Attorney's office and is continuing to fully cooperate with them.

The friars are offended and scandalized by Fr. Paul's betrayal of our trust and those of the other people he deceived.

Here is the history. In 1994, Fr. Paul Bielecki entered the Capuchin Order in Krakow, Poland, joining the Capuchin Krakow Province. He was ordained as a priest in Krakow in 2001.

Beginning in 2011, at the request of the Capuchin Krakow Province, Fr. Paul became a guest of the Province of St. Mary, which covers New York and New England. He came here to pursue an advanced degree at NYU. He became a member of the Province of St. Mary in 2019 and has resided in New York since 2011.

Until recently, there was no reason to suspect the veracity of his credentials.

Effective the spring of 2023, the Province of St. Mary instructed Fr. Paul to resign an external non-religious employment position that the Province was unable to verify. Then, the Province conducted a vigorous internal investigation which revealed Fr. Paul was not who he represented himself to be, misrepresented his background and academic credentials, had been making false representations to raise money for overseas charitable projects that did not exist, and used our headquarters and our other offices as conduits for some of the funds raised.

After discovering this, we reported our findings to the U.S. Attorney, and we continue to fully cooperate with them.

The Province did not participate in fundraising for these nonexistent overseas charitable projects, and since the spring of 2023, the Province has not given Fr. Paul any ministerial assignment. Our Capuchin Friars will continue to pray for Fr. Paul, and for those affected by Fr. Paul's activities.

As there is a criminal investigation ongoing, we cannot comment further.

Media contact: Mollie Fullington
mollconkfull@gmail.com
Mulberry Street Strategies, LLC
917 414 1639