

Wisconsin SNAP: Waukesha judge orders Pewaukee priest to stand trial for felony child sex abuse

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A Waukesha County judge this morning has determined that there is sufficient evidence for Fr. Charles Hanel to stand trial for felony sexual assault of a child. Hanel was arrested in September for sexually abusing a 13-year-old girl in the confessional. The alleged assault took place at Queen of Apostles Church in Pewaukee where Hanel is pastor.

Hanel, through his defense team, has been unusually aggressive [in out of court statements](#) concerning the case, challenging both the alleged victim and her account of the assault, along with suggesting that the case was being brought as a “referendum” on the sex abuse scandal in the church. She is a child, however, and unable to defend herself in public, as he can. Hanel’s superior, Archbishop Jerome ListECKI, needs to make it very clear that while Hanel can hire an expensive legal team, the church will not tolerate public messages that can only result in dissuading or intimidating potential victims of priest abuse, especially children, from coming forward. Hanel is, presumably, still salaried by the archdiocese and is taking care of his housing and living expenses.

Hanel is one of two priests currently scheduled for trial for child sex abuse in Wisconsin, along with Fr. William Nolan of Fort Atkinson, alleged to have sexually assaulted an altar boy for nearly four years. [A church defense lawyer](#) also went

public in that case, suggesting that the victim in the case was probably sexually assaulted by family members, not the priest. Nolan, according to the criminal complaint, assaulted the victim on dozens of occasions.

Child sexual abuse is the most underreported crime in the United States, with an annual reporting rate of under seven percent, and it's easy to see why. This means that vast majority of child sex offenders are never brought to justice and remain unknown to the community. Balancing the right of the defendant and the rights of the victim are among the most challenging tasks of the criminal justice system. It is not served by public messages, tolerated by church officials,