

The Archbishop's letter (in Tetum) is on page 3.

Karta husi arcebispo iha pajina 3.

Timor-Leste archbishop in plea over ex-priest's sex abuse case

UCA News, July 24, 2021 By Ryan Dagur, Jakarta



Archbishop Dom Virgilio do Carmo da Silva's letter to Timor-Leste clergy and religious states that Richard Daschbach is 'no longer a priest but a layman.' (Photo: YouTube)

Timor-Leste's top churchman has called on priests and religious to respect the Vatican's decision to dismiss a priest for sexual abuse and asked them to support his alleged victims in a case currently on trial.

In his July 22 letter to priests, deacons, nuns and seminarians, [Archbishop Dom Virgilio do Carmo da Silva of Dili](#) said it was necessary to emphasize the status of Richard Daschbach, a former Divine Word (SVD) priest who was dismissed by the Vatican in 2018.

He said he was responding to some priests' statements over the case but did not elaborate.

The archbishop asserted that Daschbach, 84, was "no longer a priest but a layman" and therefore "no one spoke about his priesthood anymore."

He stressed that the Vatican's decision to dismiss him "came from a deep and lengthy process that led to a final decision."

The prelate's letter asked recipients not to interfere with the ongoing civil legal process. "Let us collaborate to support the civil court to make the judicial process right and provide support to the victims," he said.

[The priest told them] how they should all be thankful for things that Richard Daschbach has done. It just goes to show how poisoned the community is by him

The letter is at least the third released by Catholic officials regarding the priestly status of Daschbach in Timor-Leste, where many people, including church members, still address him as “Father” and continue to show support for him.

In March, the country’s SVD superior, Father Yohanes Suban Gapun, issued a letter stating that the American priest’s dismissal by the congregation and Vatican was based on “his admission of the heinous crime of abusing minors.”

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Timor issued a statement in January in which president Bishop Norberto do Amaral of Maliana called on Catholics to respect Pope Francis' decision to dismiss Daschbach.

A UCA News source said a priest in an alleged victim's village had used a sermon to ask the faithful to see Daschbach's kindness.

“[The priest told them] how they should all be thankful for things that Richard Daschbach has done,” the source said. “It just goes to show how poisoned the community is by him.”

Meanwhile, on social media, some of Daschbach’s supporters are still sharing photos of him appearing to lead a Mass.

He continues to enjoy support in a country where many consider him a hero for helping in the fight for independence from Indonesia.

One of his main supporters is Xanana Gusmao, the country's independence hero and former prime minister and president, who has publicly stated his support for Daschbach.

The ex-priest is accused of sexually abusing young girls at the Topu Honis shelter in Kutet, Oecusse, which he founded in 1993

Daschbach’ trial resumed on July 5 after a series of postponements due to him using Covid-19 social restrictions as an excuse not to appear before judges. Proceedings are expected to end on July 30.

The ex-priest is accused of sexually abusing young girls at the Topu Honis shelter in Kutet, Oecusse, which he founded in 1993.

He is also charged with possessing child pornography and domestic violence and faces up to 20 years in prison. He is also wanted in the United States for alleged wire fraud.

On July 13, on the sidelines of a court hearing, Daschbach was accused of threatening to kill Barbara Oliveira, a lawyer from JU,S Jurídico Social Consultoria, the legal advocacy group representing 17 alleged victims.



ARQUIDIOCESE METROPOLITANA DE DILI **SECRETARIADO - CÂMARA ECLESIÁSTICA**

Dili, 22 de Julho 2021

COMUNICADO

Dame Cristo nian hela ho imi hotu,

Relaciona ho declaração Amu balun iha Arquidiocese kona ba processo investigação caso Topo Honis, Arquidiocese hakarak fo hanoin dala ida tan ba Padres, Religiosos/as, Diáconos, Fraters, no Agente Pastoral sira katak:

1. Sr. Richard Daschbach hetan tiha ona nia Sentença hosi Doutrina da Fé, Prot. No 208/2018-67069, 06 de novembro de 2018, housi Amu Papa Francisco katak: nia laos ona padre maibe nudar leigo.
2. Nudar Decreto hosi Santo Padre, ne'e duni la iha tan ida atu koalia kona ba sacerdócio ex-padre nian ne'e.
3. Husu ba Padres, Diáconos, Fraters, Madres no Agente Pastoral hotu atu respeita ba Decreto ne'e no la iha tan comentário.
4. Amu Papa nia decisão ne'e mai husi processo klean no naruk ida no ikus hodi hasai decisão final ida.
5. Husu ba Padres, Madres, Diáconos, Fraters no Agente Pastoral sira atu la intervem iha processo justiça nebé Ministério Público halo hela.
6. Mai ita colabora no fo apoio tomak ba Ministério Público atu halo lolos processo justiça hodi fo apoio ba vítima sira.

Dala ida tan husu ita hotu respeita no halo tuir decisão Amu Papa nian.

Obrigado barak ba imi nia atenção no compreensão.

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Dom Virgílio do Carmo da Silva, SDB
Arcebispo Metropolita de Dili

