



This photo from July 22, 2009 shows Omaha Archbishop George Lucas, center, at St. Cecilia Cathedral in Omaha, Neb. Lucas is among 56 other alleged abusers named in a host of recent lawsuits filed against Catholic leaders in Missouri. (AP/Nati Harnik)

Jim Salter

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Sixty people allege in new lawsuits filed in Missouri that they were abused as children by dozens of Catholic priests, nuns and others, and the man who now leads the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, is among the accused.

Five separate lawsuits seeking unspecified damages were filed this week in St. Louis and neighboring counties. All told, the lawsuits name 56 alleged abusers. The suits seek unspecified damages.

Among those named is Omaha Archbishop George Lucas. A lawsuit filed Wednesday in St. Louis County Circuit Court said the unnamed accuser was 16 when he met Lucas at the now-closed St. Louis Preparatory Seminary in the late 1980s, where Lucas was a priest and dean of education. The lawsuit accused Lucas of sexually abusing the boy multiple times and offering better grades for sexual favors.

Lucas, in a statement on Thursday, strongly defended himself.

"I categorically deny the accusation made by an anonymous person," Lucas said. "I have never had sexual contact with another person. I referred the matter to the apostolic nuncio, Pope Francis' representative in Washington, D.C., for his guidance."

The lawsuits allege abuse dating as far back as the 1940s, and as recent as 2015. David Clohessy of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, or SNAP, said at least 10 of the alleged abusers are still alive, and he expressed concern that they could abuse again. Some of those named have previously been convicted of crimes or named in previous civil cases.

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In one case, a lawsuit alleges that both a priest and a nun sexually abused a girl with an intellectual disability from 1999 through 2002, when she was 8-12 years old. The lawsuit said the priest threatened to kill the girl if she resisted. When she went to another school from 2002 through 2004, she was abused by another priest, the lawsuit said.

The lawsuits also name the Archdiocese of St. Louis and its current archbishop, Mitchell T. Rozanski, alleging that St. Louis church leaders have "known of the sexual abuse perpetrated upon its young parishioners and children in the

community” without stopping it.

“This shameless cover-up spanned decades and allowed various clergy and other employees to access and sexually abuse numerous children,” the lawsuits state.

Messages were left with the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

In 2019, the Archdiocese of St. Louis [released the names of 61 clergy](#) facing what it determined to be “substantiated” allegations of sexual abuse of children. The investigation in St. Louis followed the release of a 2018 [report in Pennsylvania](#) that cited the abuse of more than 1,000 children by hundreds of priests since the 1940s and the efforts of church leaders to cover it up.