



Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel-Annunciation Parish, greets parishioners outside Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Brooklyn, New York, Sept. 22. (Sean Piccoli)



by Sean Piccoli

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Brooklyn, N.Y. — September 23, 2024

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A pastor who has been thrust into the middle of the expanding federal corruption investigation into the administration of Mayor Eric Adams of New York City addressed the controversy for the first time with his parishioners on Sunday.

"I need your prayers," Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello told the congregation near the end of Mass Sunday morning, Sept. 22, at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Brooklyn. Parishioners responded with applause as the priest spoke publicly for the first time about a local television news report that said one of the churches he serves as pastor received a subpoena this summer from federal investigators inquiring into his dealings with a New York businessman, Frank Carone.

Carone is a confidante of Adams and a campaign fundraiser well-known for mixing business and politics. The subpoena sought information about financial or business transactions between Gigantiello and Carone, [NBC News 4 in New York first reported](#) last week. It is unclear from the report how, if at all, the church subpoena intersects with a flurry of criminal investigations swirling around the mayor as campaign contributions, awarding of city contracts, and other practices draw federal investigators' scrutiny.

In a statement emailed to the National Catholic Reporter, a spokeswoman for the Brooklyn Diocese said the diocese could not "confirm or deny receipt of a subpoena. What I can say is the Diocese is fully committed to cooperating with law enforcement in all investigations, including of conduct at individual parishes or involving any priest."

This is not the first time that the monsignor, pastor of Our Lady of Mount Carmel-Annunciation Parish, has been in the news. Last November, the diocese [demoted Gigantiello](#) from his post of diocesan vicar of and removed his parish administrative and financial oversight duties, after he allowed a pop singer, Sabrina Carpenter, to film a provocative music video inside Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for a fee of \$5,000.

The priest apologized and kept his pastoral duties, and the church was reconsecrated in a Mass of Reparation led by Brooklyn Bishop Robert Brennan.

In 2018, Our Lady of Mount Carmel and Annunciation [parishes merged into one](#) parish in the Williamsburg neighborhood. Both churches continue to be used as

houses of worship.

'He's an excellent fundraiser; that's his gift,' one longtime Mount Carmel parishioner said of Msgr. Jamie Gigantiello.

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Regarding the subpoena, neither Gigantiello nor Carone has been accused of any wrongdoing in connection with the federal investigation. Both men, through spokespersons, told News 4 that to their knowledge they are not the investigation's targets. Their relationship dates back to Gigantiello's time as pastor to Carone's family, News 4 reported.

Gigantiello grew up in Long Island City, a neighborhood in Queens, New York, and his accent bears the imprint of his Queens upbringing. He entered the priesthood in 1995 after a career as a chef. He became the Brooklyn Diocese's vicar of development in 2011 and pastor of the Mount Carmel-Annunciation Parish in 2017.

He has had a reputation as a gregarious public figure with a gift of gab and an active social media presence. "He's an excellent fundraiser; that's his gift," said one longtime Mount Carmel parishioner who declined to give her name.

A New York Fire Department chaplain, Gigantiello socializes comfortably with city leaders. He traveled with Adams and Carone to Rome in May, News 4 reported. As a working chef in his earlier life, he carried his culinary training into the priesthood by becoming a cookbook author, cooking show host, and producer of a brand of homemade tomato sauce called "A Taste of Heaven," whose proceeds go to charity.

As more than 100 people sat in the pews of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Sunday morning Sept. 22, and others watched on a Facebook livestream, the priest kept his remarks about the subpoena general and brief, and opened with a joke at his own expense.

"I'm sure you saw my advertisement for my cookbook and tomato sauce on the news this week," he said, referencing details of his culinary résumé that were mentioned in the News 4 report.

"That cost a lot of money to put that advertisement there," Gigantiello continued to chuckle from parishioners, adding that he had to mind his words while on a livestream. He concluded by saying, "The truth will set you free. Amen. I need your prayers."

The congregation burst into applause. Afterward, he stood outside on a pleasant first day of fall and spoke to parishioners as some stayed for coffee and pastries on the church's terrace.

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"We don't know anything, but we do know that we love him," Rosemarie Walsh, the parish's director of faith formation, said on the steps of the tan brick, art deco-style church building.

Gigantiello is so well thought of, Walsh told NCR, pointing out that Catholics from other parish neighborhoods come to Mass at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. "He's brought this parish to a wonderful place," she added.

"I work with him," Walsh said, "and I see the good that he does behind the scenes. That doesn't get reported."

"We know the kind of man he is," said a white-haired male parishioner who declined to give his name as he waited outside for the Saturday evening Mass to begin. Other parishioners interviewed over the weekend said they're concerned Gigantiello will be unfairly tarred by investigations that are ultimately aimed at City Hall — "collateral damage" as one parishioner who asked not to be identified put it. They lamented the music video incident being dredged up again in reporting about the church subpoena.

The federal investigations in New York City involve some of the mayor's closest aides and top department heads. Adams' police commissioner, Edward Caban, resigned this month after federal agents searched his home and seized his phone during a sweep that also targeted the city's deputy mayor and schools chancellor.

Caban's replacement, former FBI agent Thomas Donlon, revealed on Saturday that he, too, is the subject of a federal probe after agents executed search warrants at his addresses and seized materials from several years ago "unrelated to my work

with the New York City Police Department," according to a statement issued by the NYPD.

Adams also had his phones and an iPad seized in November by FBI agents looking into potentially illegal campaign contributions to his first mayoral campaign in 2021 from donors with ties to the government of Turkey. Neither Adams nor any of his top aides have been charged with crimes.

Gigantiello's friend Carone is a former Brooklyn Democratic Party lawyer who served as the mayor's first chief of staff until he left to start a business consulting firm. Although he has not been "accused of wrongdoing," News 4 reported, members of the City Council "have questioned whether Carone has used his City Hall connections to build his business — while at the same time raising money for Adams' re-election bid."