

# FALLOUT: PRAYING FOR JUSTICE

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# Fr John v Catholic Church



STANDING UP: Fr John Gallagher

**A STRABANE priest is taking his fight against the Catholic Church to the US Supreme Court, the Sunday World can reveal.**

Fr John Gallagher wants to sue the church for allegedly defaming his character after he blew the whistle on a pervert priest.

He is taking his four-year fight against the church to the highest court in the US to see if he has the right to sue for damages.

Fr Gallagher, who's based in Palm Beach, Florida, made world headlines five years ago when he claimed the church had locked him out of his parochial house in revenge for going to the police about a priest who had admitted sex offences to him.



ROW: Fr Gallagher's church in West Palm Beach and, left, Fr Jose Palimattom

The 51-year-old, who arrived in Florida in 2000, claims the church had told him to put pervert priest Father Jose Palimattom on a plane to another country rather than contact the police. And when he refused he says he was put under so much stress he was hospitalised with a suspected heart attack and when he got out he claims he returned to the parochial house to find the locks had been changed.



The church has since launched an astonishing attack on the Co. Tyrone priest accusing him of "blatantly lying" about the affair and of a raft of other allegations.

Fr Gallagher said the Diocese slandered his name after he helped put another Palimattom behind bars for showing pornography to a child.

Now he and his attorney have one question for the US Supreme Court: are they allowed to sue the Catholic

## ULSTER PRIEST TO FIGHT FOR DAMAGES AFTER BEING LOCKED OUT OF HOME AND ACCUSED OF LYING ABOUT SEX ABUSE

Church for defamation when it's never been done before?

"There's really no protection in the church for anyone who steps forward," said Father Gallagher.

He said he was frozen out of the Diocese of Palm Beach for alerting the authorities but the church have claimed that is not the case.

"In my mind, Father Gallagher is a hero," said Ted Babbitt, Gallagher's attorney. "He reported this child abuse when he was told not to by the church."

Palimattom was later convicted, served six months in jail, and was deported.

But Gallagher said the church

**EXCLUSIVE BY STEVEN MOORE**

turned their backs on him, claiming the Diocese wanted him to cover up the allegations.

"The phrase they used was, 'you don't think like the rest of us,'" said Gallagher, who claimed the Diocese later defamed him in church as retaliation.

It was reported in 2016 that, according to Gallagher's lawsuit, the bishop ordered a statement be read in all masses that January, telling worshippers Gallagher was making unfounded allegations.

"Fr Gallagher was called essentially crazy, he was called

a liar, that's not true," said Babbitt.

Late last year, the Florida Supreme Court said it would not hear the case, deciding it wasn't in their jurisdiction.

### IMMUNE

Gallagher and his attorney said the church should not be immune from civil suits that have nothing to do with church doctrine.

"This is about the protection of minors, protection of children and the vulnerable, and if there's no protection for the person who will speak out on their behalf and be their voice, then we have a serious problem," said Gallagher.

Two years ago speaking to the Sunday World Fr Gallagher said he felt "utterly betrayed", not only by the Catholic Church, but by his own former priest friends as well.

"After giving 30 years of your life to the church it has been very traumatic that I can't even go to church as I had done every day," he said.

"I haven't been to mass in well over a year because I'm persona non-grata with the Catholic Church.

"They blackened my name and ruined my reputation when they had priests in the diocese read out a statement at mass that was a liar and was mentally ill."

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