



Members of SNAP (the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests) hold up signs during a demonstration in front of the archdiocese headquarters in San Francisco, March 29, 2010. (AP/Paul Sakuma, file)

by The Associated Press

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The cases of two men who allege they were sexually abused as children in Northern California by a now-deceased priest can proceed to trial, a federal judge ruled.

The decision April 11 by U.S. Bankruptcy Judge Dennis Montali comes nearly two years after San Francisco's Roman Catholic archdiocese filed for bankruptcy to manage more than 500 lawsuits alleging child sexual abuse by church priests and employees.

Montali said his decision will go into effect June 30 to allow more time for ongoing mediation.

The two cases were days away from going to trial when the Archdiocese of San Francisco filed for [bankruptcy](#) in August 2023. The archdiocese didn't immediately respond to an email April 12 from The Associated Press seeking comment.

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The two men, who have remained anonymous, allege [Fr. Joseph Pritchard](#) sexually abused them in the 1970s when he was pastor at St. Martin of Tours parish in San Jose, which at the time was part of the Archdiocese of San Francisco.

The men are among dozens of people who say they were abused by Pritchard, a popular priest who worked in various parishes in the Bay Area from the late 1940s through the mid-80s. He died of cancer in 1988.

"The Archdiocese and Archbishop have stifled the voices of survivors for too long. This is a victory. These trials are long overdue – it's time for survivors' voices to be heard," Jeff Anderson, an attorney representing over 125 survivors in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, said in a statement.