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A Catholic priest has pleaded guilty to two counts of "unnatural acts" with a minor for accusations of sexual abuse dating back to the 1970s.

James Randall Gillette was sentenced to five years of probation in Suffolk Superior Court in Boston on Jan. 2, according to court records.

More serious charges of child rape and indecent assault and battery on a minor were dismissed, but he still has to register as a sex offender.

Mitchell Garabedian, a lawyer for Anthony Sgherza, one of Gillette's two accusers, said Monday that his client feels "validated" by the guilty plea.

Sgherza filed a civil complaint against Gillette in 2014, saying he was repeatedly abused by Gillette starting when he was 9 years old and until he was 13. The case was dismissed after Sgherza reached a settlement with the church, according to Garabedian.

Sgherza, who splits his time between Vermont and New York, now helps other survivors cope with the trauma of abuse, Garabedian added.

Gillette had been assigned to St. Michael's Parish in Union City, New Jersey, and St. Gabriel's Parish in Boston during the time Sgherza was abused. He also worked in parishes in Pittsburgh, New York City and Mexico City and also served as a missionary in Honduras, according to Garabedian.

Dan Flynn, director of health and social service at Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, which is the religious order that Gillette is affiliated with, said Gillette has not been defrocked but has been on restrictions that ban him from identifying as a priest or serving in church functions since the 1990s.

Flynn said Gillette is currently living privately in Massachusetts. He declined to comment further.

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