

APPELLATE DIVISION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, FIRST DEPARTMENT

John Doe JP v. Archdiocese of N.Y.

John Doe JP, 2026 NY Slip Op 00015 (Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York First Department 2026) · No. Index No. 950638/20, 950253/21, 950146/20, 951386/21, 950631/21, 950057/21, 950673/21, 950598/20, 950188/20, 950371/21, 950191/20, 950359/20; Appeal No. 5510; Case No. 2024-07684 · Decided January 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The Appellate Division, First Department unanimously affirmed an order requiring the Archdiocese of New York to disclose its Tribunal Laicization File concerning former priest Francis J. Stinner, subject to redactions of Social Security numbers and dates of birth. The court held that the requested records were reasonably calculated to lead to relevant evidence concerning alleged abuse, the Archdiocese's knowledge, and its response, and that the discovery did not implicate canon law or sacramental issues sufficient to raise a First Amendment concern.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Department
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Renwick, P.J.; Manzanet, J.; Gesmer, J.; Higgitt, J.; Michael, J.
JURISDICTION	Appellate Division, First Department, New York
DECIDED	January 6, 2026
DOCKET	Index No. 950638/20, 950253/21, 950146/20, 951386/21, 950631/21, 950057/21, 950673/21, 950598/20, 950188/20, 950371/21, 950191/20, 950359/20; Appeal No. 5510; Case No. 2024-07684
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The Archdiocese appealed from a Supreme Court, New York County order directing it, after in camera review, to disclose its Tribunal Laicization File concerning a former priest, subject to redactions of social security numbers and dates of birth.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Abuse-of-discretion review of Supreme Court's discovery determination.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published New York Appellate Division opinion

PARTIES

The Archdiocese of New York v. John Doe JP et al.

TOPICS

discovery dispute

civil procedure

first amendment

evidence

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PRACTICE AREAS

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child sexual abuse litigation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Supreme Court providently exercised its discretion in directing the Archdiocese to disclose the Tribunal Laicization File after in camera review.
2. Whether production of the file implicated canon law, sacramental issues, or religious doctrine in a manner creating a First Amendment bar to discovery.

HOLDINGS

1. Supreme Court providently exercised its discretion in directing the Archdiocese to produce an unredacted copy of the Tribunal Laicization File, subject to redactions of social security numbers and dates of birth, because the demands were reasonably calculated to lead to relevant and admissible evidence.
2. The First Amendment did not bar discovery because the Archdiocese failed to demonstrate that the requested information implicated canon law or sacramental issues, and the appeal did not contest or address the laicization decision or the religious doctrine underlying it.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Supreme Court providently exercised its discretion in directing the Archdiocese to produce an unredacted copy of the file of the Tribunal proceedings against Stinner.” ([*1])

“Moreover, the Archdiocese did not demonstrate that the information sought implicated canon law or sacramental issues that might give rise to a First Amendment issue.” ([*1])

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs alleged that Francis J. Stinner sexually abused them while serving as a priest in the Archdiocese of New York and that the Archdiocese knew of his conduct yet allowed him to continue in ministry. The Archdiocese later appointed a committee to consider whether Stinner had violated ecclesiastical law and laicized him in 2005. Plaintiffs sought the Tribunal Laicization File as potential evidence concerning the pattern of abuse, the Archdiocese's knowledge, and its response to the danger posed by Stinner.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs in Child Victims Act actions sought discovery of the Archdiocese's Tribunal proceedings file concerning the laicization of former priest Francis J. Stinner. Supreme Court, New York County, directed

production of an unredacted copy of the file subject to limited redactions. The Appellate Division unanimously affirmed without costs.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- Beals v Roman Catholic Archdiocese of N.Y., 242 AD3d 404 (1st Dept 2025)
- J.L. v Roman Catholic Archdiocese of N.Y., 222 AD3d 483, 484 (1st Dept 2023)
- McNierney v Archdiocese of N.Y., 221 AD3d 489, 489 (1st Dept 2023)
- Matter of Congregation Yetev Lev D'Satmar, Inc. v Kahana, 9 NY3d 282, 286 (2007)
- ARK292 Doe v Archdiocese of New York, 242 AD3d 501, 502 (1st Dept 2025)

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