



A Catholic priest in Spain has been arrested over the alleged possession of thousands of images of child sex abuse. Police said they found 21,000 images on computers inside the 52-year-old's church in Vilafames, in the east of the country.

The priest, who has not been named, has been bailed and will appear before a judge in a fortnight, media say. The Segorbe-Castellon diocese said it had suspended the priest and was ready to clarify the facts in court.

"If the accusation is true, this is something that hurts us deeply, that we sincerely regret and that we reject unreservedly," the El Pais newspaper quoted a statement from the diocese as saying.

It said it would also offer the priest "the necessary means for a fair defence". Spain has largely escaped the child sex abuse scandals that have hit the Catholic Church in many European countries and the US.

But formal accusations have been made against a Carmelite monk in eastern Spain and Franciscan brothers in the south. Police also launched an investigation in May into three members of staff at a care home run by a Catholic order in Cordoba.

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