

Jesuit priest becomes chaplain of the House

by [Charles Pope](#) in the [June 28, 2011](#) issue

Jesuit Patrick Conroy was sworn in May 25 as House chaplain, making him the first Society of Jesus priest to hold the position—and the first chaplain forced to navigate around the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandals.

"It's clear this loyal servant of the faithful is uniquely suited to serve as chaplain of the people's House," Speaker John Boehner said, noting that the chaplain "is the anchor of the House.

"[Minority] leader Pelosi and I have gotten a chance to know Father Pat, and we're honored that he has accepted our invitation to serve as chaplain," said Boehner. "We are blessed to have his guidance and his wisdom as we discharge our duties and fulfill our obligations to current and future generations of Americans."

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had raised questions about Conroy, 60, after learning that the Jesuits' Oregon Province agreed to a \$166.1 million bankruptcy settlement involving more than 500 active claims of sexual or physical abuse.

After requesting and receiving additional information, Pelosi later gave Conroy her full support. Though the dustup was brief, Conroy referred to it as a "firestorm" that exposed the extent to which the abuse cases remain connected to the modern church.

Conroy becomes the 60th House chaplain and succeeds Catholic priest Daniel Coughlin, who retired last month after 11 years in the position. Until his appointment, Conroy taught at Jesuit High School in Beaverton, Oregon. —RNS