

Releases documents on priest abuses

Priest's appeal holds up report for an hour

By SEAN MURPHY
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CONCORD — An eleventh-hour appeal by a yet-to-be-named priest delayed the release of a massive church sex abuse report by the attorney general's office this morning.

Senior Assistant Attorney General N. William Delker said prosecutors had to remove information relating to that priest, which delayed the release by one hour. Delker declined to name the priest, but said there would be a hearing today in Merrimack County Superior Court in Concord to decide if the information would remain a secret.

Delker said this morning he did not know if the hearing would be open to the public.

The report is expected to contain some of the most graphic details of alleged abuses on the part of New Hampshire priests to date. The report's 151-page summary conspicuously does not include any reference to former Dover and Hudson priest Joseph T. Maguire, who was arrested last week and charged with abuse of a minor. He now faces 21 separate counts of varying degrees of sexual assault, including rape, and pleaded not guilty at his arraignment Friday in Strafford County Superior Court. It is not yet clear whether a new investigation in the past year has led to the charges, or whether Maguire's arrest stems from a 1986 investigation by Dover Police.

Former priest Paul Aube, however, has been mentioned, including allegations against him, specifically one case in 1981, when he was serving as pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Rochester. Aube served at that parish between Sept. 15, 1976 and October 9, 1981.

Scandal has ripped through the

☆ Report



Jim Cole/AP photo

NT ATTORNEY GENERAL WILL DELKER looks over the thousands of pages of church documents this morning in Concord. The documents show how the Diocese of Manchester handled sextants against priests.

's who in church hierarchy



BISHOP ODORE J. GENDRON — Born in Manchester on Sept. 12, 1921. Attended seminary in Quebec. Ordained in 1947. Served in various New Hampshire parishes before serving as bishop 1974-90. Retired.



BISHOP LEO E. O'NEIL — Ordained in 1955 in Springfield, Mass. Served in communities around Massachusetts before becoming bishop of New Hampshire in 1989. Died of cancer in 1997 at



AUXILIARY BISHOP FRANCIS J. CHRISTIAN — Born Oct. 8, 1942, in Peterborough. Ordained in 1968 and made auxiliary bishop of New Hampshire in 1996, a post he still holds.



THE REV. EDWARD J. ARSENAULT — Ordained in 1991. Serves as McCormack's chancellor and secretary of administration. He is the diocese's delegate for handling sexual misconduct allegations against clergymen.

MORE ABOUT

9,000 pages detail cases against eight priests

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Catholic church ever since investigations by the Boston Globe, following the high-profile sex abuse trial and conviction of former priest John Geoghan, exposed even more allegations of abuse in Massachusetts.

The Diocese of Manchester has been under intense scrutiny ever since February of last year, when it released a list of more than a dozen of its own priests against whom the church received what it called "credible" allegations of abuse over the years. Those priests, the diocese maintained at the time, were no longer allowed to serve as pastors, or to function officially as priests, but the announcement brought the scandal home.

Attorneys representing dozens of victims in the Granite State sued the diocese, and have so far won judgments in excess of \$1 million, with more suits still active today.

Prosecutors on the county level — county attorneys were tasked to handle

criminal investigations of individual priests — began pursuing any claims of abuse they learned of.

Former Attorney General Philip V. McLaughlin launched his own investigation around the time of the diocese's announcement last year. He assigned a task force of more than 20 researchers, investigators, lawyers, legal advisors, and

other experts to determine whether the state could pursue criminal charges against the diocese itself for its role in permitting the abuse to happen.

That investigation nearly led to a grand jury indictment of the diocese in December 2002 on a charge of endangering the welfare of a child, but the diocese negotiated an eleventh-hour settlement with McLaughlin's office before that happened.

In exchange for prosecutors dropping the charge, the diocese agreed to, among other things, allow the attorney general's office to regularly monitor it to make sure it was abiding by regulations that now state it must disclose allegations of abuse against its priests to the proper authorities.

In addition, the diocese had to allow McLaughlin's office to disclose its prosecutors' dossier on the diocese — all 9,000 pages of it — to anyone willing to pay the \$450 charge for it, including members of the public and the media.

The 154-page report details evidence prosecutors would have used in seeking criminal charges against the diocese if the December settlement hadn't been reached. Prosecutors acknowledged that the diocese addressed some molestation complaints with steps including getting counseling for the priest.

But, prosecutors said, "The state was prepared to prove that

the steps taken by the diocese were so ineffective that they did not negate the fact that the diocese 'knowingly' endangered the welfare of a minor."

As planned, the diocese released its own report Monday apologizing for how it handled allegations in the past and contrasting that with how they are dealt with now.

"Child sexual abuse is a terrible crime in the church and in society," Bishop John B. McCormack said in an introductory letter. "Child sexual abuse is an affront to the dignity of the person, and it violates every principle of profound respect for human life that the gospel entails."

He praised victims for their courage in coming forward and apologized for the harm done to them.

In the unprecedented settlement, the diocese agreed its conduct had harmed children and that it probably would have been convicted of child endangerment, a misdemeanor, but for the settlement.

In its report Monday, however, the diocese said it doesn't "necessarily agree with all aspects of (the state's) final analysis." It said it could have mounted a vigorous defense, but doing so would not have helped victims.

The church report detailed lessons learned by the diocese during the past year. They

include the need to pay more attention to victims, involving civil authorities in investigations and having more than one person handle allegations.

Thousands of pages of church documents have been released in Massachusetts during the past year by lawyers for victims and alleged victims suing the church. And three weeks ago, a grand jury in New York issued a scathing report accusing the Diocese of Rockville Centre of sheltering molesters and failing to protect children.

The New Hampshire documents and reports may provide an even more comprehensive look at the inner workings of a diocese than those in Boston or Rockville Centre, however.

McCormack is named in the New Hampshire documents and state report, but prosecutors focused on incidents before he became bishop of Manchester in 1998.

The state's report was to focus on eight clergymen, The Associated Press learned. Officials have said the eight were not selected because of the seriousness of the allegations against them, but because their cases contained strong evidence the diocese had mishandled the molestation complaints.

Two of the eight priests focused on in the state report are in prison for criminal sexual assault convictions. A source speaking on condition of

anonymity identified them as the Rev. Gordon MacRae, convicted of molesting four boys during the 1990s, and the Rev. Roger Fortier, convicted of assaulting two Farmington boys during the 1990s.

The six other priests profiled in the state report have been accused of abuse in civil lawsuits.

The source identified them as:

- The Rev. Paul Aube, who has acknowledged molesting several minors during the 1970s.

- The Rev. Albert Boulanger, accused of abuse in Concord, Berlin and Ashland between 1960 and 1960.

- The Rev. Gerald Chalifour, accused of abuse in Allentown and Farmington during the 1960s and 1970s.

- The Rev. Robert J. Densmore, accused of molesting three New London minors during the 1970s.

- The Rev. Raymond H. Laferriere, accused of abuse in Hudson and Manchester during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s.

- Leo Landry, a former priest accused of abuse in Berlin, Manchester and Somersworth during the 1960s and 1970s.

Five of the eight — all but MacRae, Fortier and Landry — were identified by the diocese in February 2002 as being the subject of credible allegations of sexual misconduct in the past.

Aube became a key of the state investigation when he told

prosecutors last year that church officials insisted he continue working with children even after he admitted sexual misconduct with minors and asked for help. The diocese has not commented on Aube's claims.

Boulanger, Chalifour, Densmore and Laferriere are retired. None has a listed telephone and they could not be reached for comment. The diocese would not release contact information on the priests.

Fortier was convicted in 1998 of assaulting two minors during the 1990s. He later pleaded guilty to trying to assault another minor. He is serving 20 to 40 years in prison. Calls to his lawyer were not immediately returned.

Landry left the priesthood in 1972 to marry. He has been accused of abusing nine minors. Landry's telephone was out of service. In April 2002, he denied the first allegation against him.

MacRae was convicted in 1994 of raping a 15-year-old boy in 1983. He is serving 33-1/2 to 67 years in prison. He later pleaded guilty to assaulting three other boys.

In an interview in prison last week, MacRae maintained his innocence, saying the boys lied. He has sought help from the diocese to prove his innocence.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.