

VATICAN: Ambassador to the Dominican Republic Defrocked in Abuse Inquiry

Written by Laurie Goodstein
Friday, 27 June 2014 00:00

{lang: 'en-GB'}



The Vatican has defrocked its former ambassador to the Dominican Republic, an archbishop from Poland who was accused of sexually abusing boys while he served as the pope's representative in the Caribbean nation.

The former archbishop, Jozef Wesolowski, 65, is the first papal nuncio known to have been removed from the priesthood because of accusations of child sexual abuse. The Vatican announced on Friday that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which handles abuse cases, had recently completed his canonical trial. He has two months to appeal the decision.

He still faces a criminal trial by the Vatican because, as a diplomat, he is a citizen of the Vatican city-state. It would be the first such trial held under new rules for criminal procedures implemented by the Vatican last year and a test of [Pope Francis' resolve to turn a page](#) on the long-running sexual abuse scandal.

Francis will reportedly meet next week in Rome with abuse survivors from Ireland and other countries — the first time as pope that he will personally hear the testimony of those who have suffered abuse by Roman Catholic priests. Abuse survivors and their parents in Buenos Aires, where Francis was archbishop, said in interviews that they had requested meetings with him to share their stories and were consistently turned down.

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The former ambassador's case has brought international scrutiny to the Vatican's procedures for handling charges of sexual abuse. Two United Nations panels looking into the church's handling of sexual abuse cases this year [closely questioned Vatican representatives in Geneva](#) about whether the church would discipline him.

The ambassador was recalled to Rome in August after the archbishop of Santo Domingo, Cardinal Nicolas de Jesus Lopez, went to Rome to report the allegations against him. Dominican authorities opened an investigation after the ambassador had left, and they say they forwarded their report to the Vatican. But they said they could not prosecute him there because he was protected by diplomatic immunity.

The case has also reverberated in Poland, where the ambassador was raised and ordained as a priest by Cardinal Karol Jozef Wojtyla, later Pope John Paul II, who was [canonized as a saint in April](#). John Paul made him a bishop in 2000. The ambassador was reported to have been seen in the company of another Polish priest serving in the Dominican Republic, the Rev. Wojciech Gil (known as Father Alberto), who was accused of sexually abusing altar boys in his rural parish in the Dominican Republic. Father Gil fled to Poland last year, and in February he was indicted there on four counts of sexually abusing children in the Dominican Republic, according to news reports.

A spokesman for the Vatican did not answer questions about where the ambassador is living, how to contact his legal representatives in either the canonical or criminal proceedings or how he has responded to the charges.

An auxiliary bishop in Santo Domingo, Victor Masalles, posted a Twitter message on Monday that he was surprised to see the ambassador walking along a street in Rome. "The silence of the church has hurt the people of God," the bishop said in Spanish.

The Vatican explained Friday that the former ambassador had been "relatively free to move" pending the sentence from the church's doctrinal office. But it said that now, "all the measures adequate to the gravity of the case will be adopted against the former nuncio," though the measures were not specified.

Correction: June 27, 2014

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Because of an editing error, an earlier version of the image caption misspelled the name of the former ambassador to the Dominican Republic who was defrocked. He is Jozef Wesolowski, not Jozef Wesolowsk.

Correction: June 27, 2014

An earlier version of this article omitted John Paul II's given first name; it is Karol.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/28/world/europe/vatican-defrocks-dominican-envoy-accused-of-abuse.html>