

# Cardinal denies abuse allegations under oath

CHICAGO (CNS) — Cardinal Joseph L. Bernardin of Chicago denied under oath Nov. 24 that he sexually assaulted a former seminary student, and asked a court for a quick disposition of the case.

"I feel it is important to resolve this matter as quickly as possible," the 65-year-old prelate said.

"Further this filing gives me an opportunity to state under oath what I have said many times — that I am innocent of these charges," he said.

Cardinal Bernardin issued the statement as his lawyers filed a formal response to a \$10 million suit filed against him in federal court in Cincinnati. In the response Cardinal Bernardin again denied the allegations made by Steven Cook and requested an expedited hearing into the matter.

Cook, 34, sued the cardinal Nov. 12, charging that the cardinal and an Ohio priest assaulted him in the mid-1970s while Cardinal Bernardin was archbi-

shop of Cincinnati.

Cook, who says he has AIDS, said in the suit that he has become permanently disabled, sexually compulsive and depressed. He also named other Cincinnati church officials in the suit, but said that only Cardinal Bernardin and Father Ellis Harsham assaulted him.

The suit contended that Father Harsham, then a priest at St. Gregory Seminary in Cincinnati, repeatedly engaged in sexual acts with him, including masturbation and oral sex, and delivered him once to Cardinal Bernardin, who sodomized him. At the time Cook was a 17-year-old student at the seminary.

Father Harsham also has denied the allegations.

Meanwhile, the Cincinnati archdiocese urged anyone with knowledge of inappropriate behavior by Father Harsham or anyone else to come forward in confidence with that information.

Fifty students, faculty members and other friends of Father Harsham gathered Nov. 17 for a campus prayer vigil in support of the priest, now campus minister at Wright State University near Dayton.

Attorneys for the archdiocese were investigating a 1985 Philadelphia court document that may offer a new twist to the charges filed by Cook, who now lives there.

The document, a questionnaire

completed by Cook following a 1984 arrest on drug charges, stated he had been sexually abused by two priests. In the lawsuit, Cook said he had repressed the memories and only recently recalled the abuse.

Mark Vanderlaan, an attorney for the archdiocese, told the *Catholic Telegraph*, Cincinnati archdiocesan newspaper, that the document "could have some impact on a motion to dismiss the charges against the defendants."

## Celebrating statehood



AP/Wide World Photos

### Palestinians mark fifth anniversary

Two Palestinian women and a young girl stand near a poster of Yasser Arafat in Gaza City Nov. 15, as they take in festivities marking the fifth anniversary of Palestinian statehood. The declaration was made by the Palestine Liberation Organization after Jordan's King Hussein withdrew claims to the West Bank.

### Court agrees to decide N.Y. church-state case

WASHINGTON (CNS) — The Supreme Court said Nov. 29 that it would decide if the creation of a special separate public school district to accommodate handicapped children of a Hasidic Jewish group in New York violates church-state separation.

The justices agreed to review a New York Court of Appeals ruling that the state Legislature's solution in 1989 on how to provide services to disabled Hasidic students represented an unconstitutional endorsement of religion by the government.

Members of the Satmar Hasidic sect in an Orange County village about 40 miles from New York City teach most of their children in private religious schools.

The Kiryas Joel school district was created to take care of the needs of about 220 children too handicapped to go to private religious schools. The parents of the children had opposed sending them to nearby public schools for religious reasons.

The 12,000 residents of the village are devoutly religious and believe in maintaining an insular community. Yiddish, rather than English, is the most common language.

After the law was adopted, the village elected a seven-member board of education and the year-round

school opened in 1990.

The village board of education, a nearby school district where the Hasidic children used to attend school and New York state all appealed to the Supreme Court to hear the case.

Nathan Lewin, an attorney for the village school district, said the Supreme Court should scrap its 1971 ruling setting out a three-part test on whether the constitutional requirement on the separation between church and state has been violated.

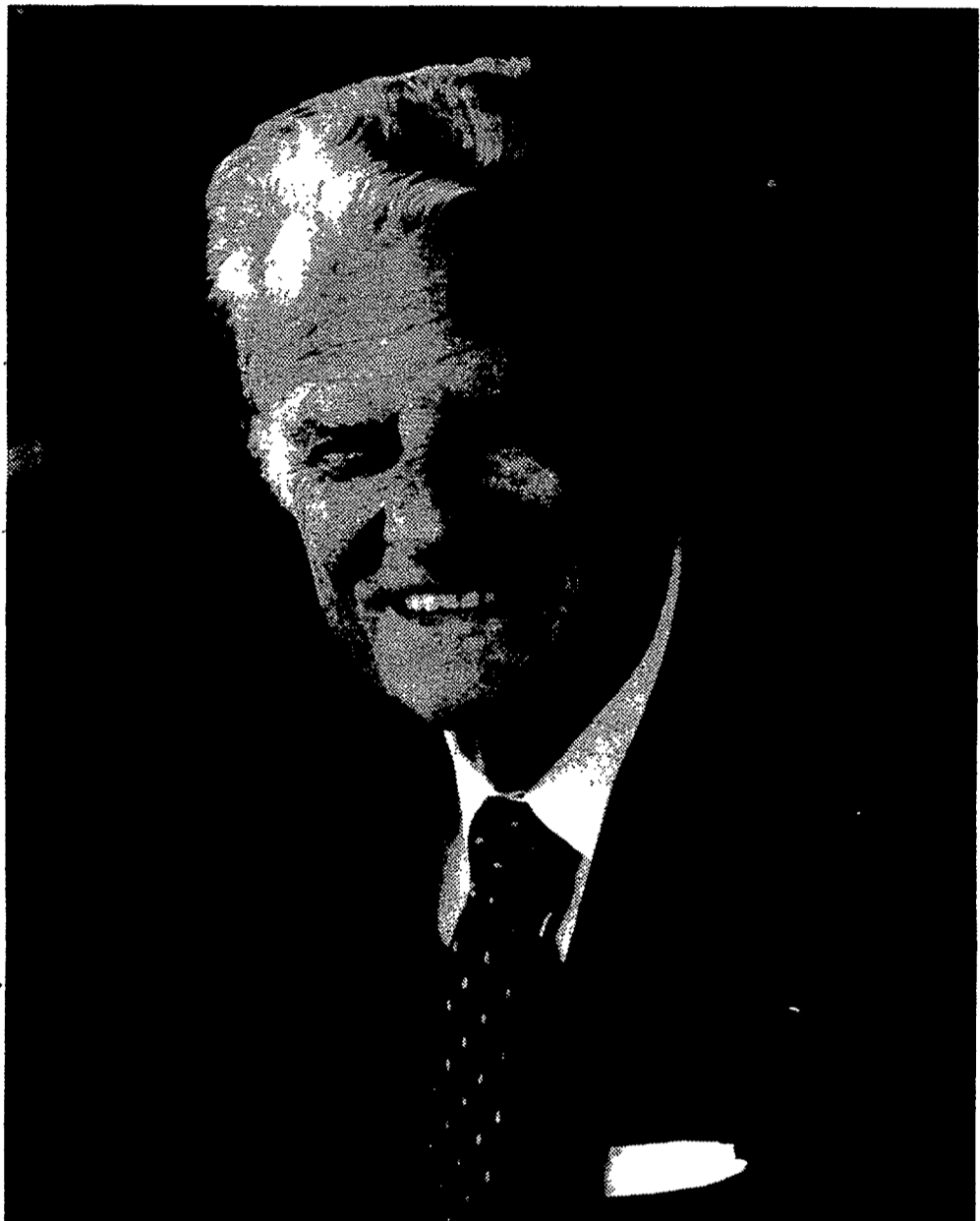
Instead, he said the court should allow states to adopt legislation "addressing the secular needs of a community sharing a common religious faith."

New York Attorney General Robert Abrams made a similar argument, saying that the state court decision shows an improper "hostility to the group's religious way of life."

The lawsuit challenging the school district had been brought by two individual taxpayers, who urged the Supreme Court to deny the appeals.

The high court will hear oral arguments in the case early next year, with a decision due by the end of the court term in June.

The district was allowed to continue operating pending a final decision in the case.



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