

WORLD & NATION

Bishop resigns in wake of sex-abuse charges

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Pope John Paul II June 10 accepted the resignation of Bishop J. Kendrick Williams of Lexington, Ky., who faces three allegations of sexual abuse of minors or young men when he was a priest.

Bishop Williams, 65, has denied the allegations. He is the second bishop this year and the third since 1998 to resign following accusations of sex offenses against under-age boys.

The Vatican notice of his resignation cited Canon 401.2 of church law, which says a bishop should resign if he is less able to govern his diocese "because of ill health or some other grave cause."

Previously a priest of the Louisville Archdiocese, Bishop Williams is named in three sexual abuse lawsuits filed against the archdiocese since mid-May.

The first was filed May 21 by James W. Bennett, now 33, who said the bishop had molested him in 1981 at the Church of Our Lady in Louisville, when Bennett was 12.

At the time the suit was filed, Bishop Williams said he had never molested anyone, but he went on leave, following Lex-

ington diocesan policy that any priest accused of sexual abuse of a minor will be relieved of pastoral duties while the allegation is investigated.

David Hall, now 51, filed a suit May 31 claiming Bishop Williams sexually abused him during confession in 1969, when Hall was an 18-year-old senior at St. Catherine High School in New Haven and the bishop was a priest assigned there.

In the third lawsuit, filed June 7, Thomas C. Probus, now 33, claimed that in 1981, when he was 12, the bishop inflicted "emotional injury and abuse" with inappropriate remarks encouraging the youth to masturbate. He said the incident occurred at Holy Trinity Parish, where Bishop Williams was pastor from 1983-84. In 1981 the bishop was still an associate pastor at Our Lady in Louisville.

The Louisville Archdiocese is a defendant in all three suits naming Bishop Williams. As of June 7 it was also a defendant in 116 other sexual abuse lawsuits, all filed since mid-April. One priest, Father Louis E. Miller, is named by nearly 50 of the plaintiffs.

James Kendrick Williams was born Sept.

5, 1936, in Larue County, Ky. He attended Old Kentucky Home High School in Bardonia, St. Mary's College in St. Mary, Spalding College in Louisville and St. Maur's School of Theology in South Union, N.J.

Ordained a priest in 1963, he served in several parishes, was archdiocesan associate director of religious education 1971-78, and was director of planning and the arch-

diocesan clergy personnel office until 1984 while also engaged in parish ministry.

In 1984 he was made auxiliary bishop of Covington, Ky.

In 1988, when the Lexington Diocese was created out of portions of the Louisville Archdiocese and Covington Diocese, he was made first bishop of the new diocese.

Cardinal wants sanctions against negligent bishops

By Michelle Martin
Catholic News Service

CHICAGO — Before leaving for the U.S. bishops' Dallas meeting on clergy sex abuse, Chicago Cardinal Francis E. George told reporters he would ask the bishops to find a way to sanction a negligent bishop who has covered up the problem and put more children at risk.

"There have to be sanctions for a bishop who has been negligent, the same as there are sanctions for a priest" who has abused children, he said.

At a press conference June 10 shortly before he flew to Dallas, Cardinal George said his recommendation for the June 13-15 meeting would include suggestions of what those sanctions might be. He declined to disclose them immediately to reporters, saying they had not yet been given to his fellow bishops.

It would be difficult to require a bishop's resignation, he said.

"Resignation is not in the hands of the bishops," he said. "It's in the hands of the Holy Father, and there you get a different dynamic. The bishops get their authority from Christ and are sent to a specific place by the Holy Father."

While the church traditionally has resisted calls to remove bishops as an infringement on apostolic authority, Cardinal George said bishops also must consider whether they are still able to lead their dioceses in a given situation.

He said he would like the bishops to address the issue of sexual abuse by non-ordained church workers in a separate policy from the one up for debate in Dallas.

At the press conference he thanked the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago for holding 38 public hearings on the issue of clerical sexual abuse May 21 and using the

comments of some 700 speakers and the input from roughly 10,000 questionnaires to create a 44-page report on "Views of the Laity."

The report said many speakers at the hearings voiced "utter disbelief" that some bishops had moved priests who abused children from one parish to another.

"These speakers indicated that in their opinion these bishops were actually more culpable for the continued wrongful conduct of these priests than the priests themselves," the report said.

Cardinal George predicted that the issue of whether a priest with even one incident of sexual abuse of a minor in his past can ever serve in any capacity again, no matter how long ago and how exemplary his ministry since the incident, would likely take up much of the discussion among the bishops.

He said the language of the draft document on that issue "sounds like you're giving someone a free pass if they do this just once," if the abuse occurred before the enactment of a national policy.

Cardinal George said the section should be reworded, and his preference would be to allow for a review board to address the complexities of the rare situation where there has been only one incident of past abuse.

In the current climate, however, he said he would expect a decision that a priest with even one substantiated allegation in the past will not be allowed to function as a priest or wear the Roman collar, even if he is not laicized.

"I can live with that," the cardinal said. "Even forgiven sin has consequences, and sometimes the consequences can be very severe. That's for the sake of the rest of the church's ability to continue her ministry."

Gunman kills monks, wounds priests

CONCEPTION, Mo. (CNS) — The abbot of Conception Abbey Benedictine monastery mourned two monks killed by a gunman June 10 as men who had lived "in a generous, gracious spirit."

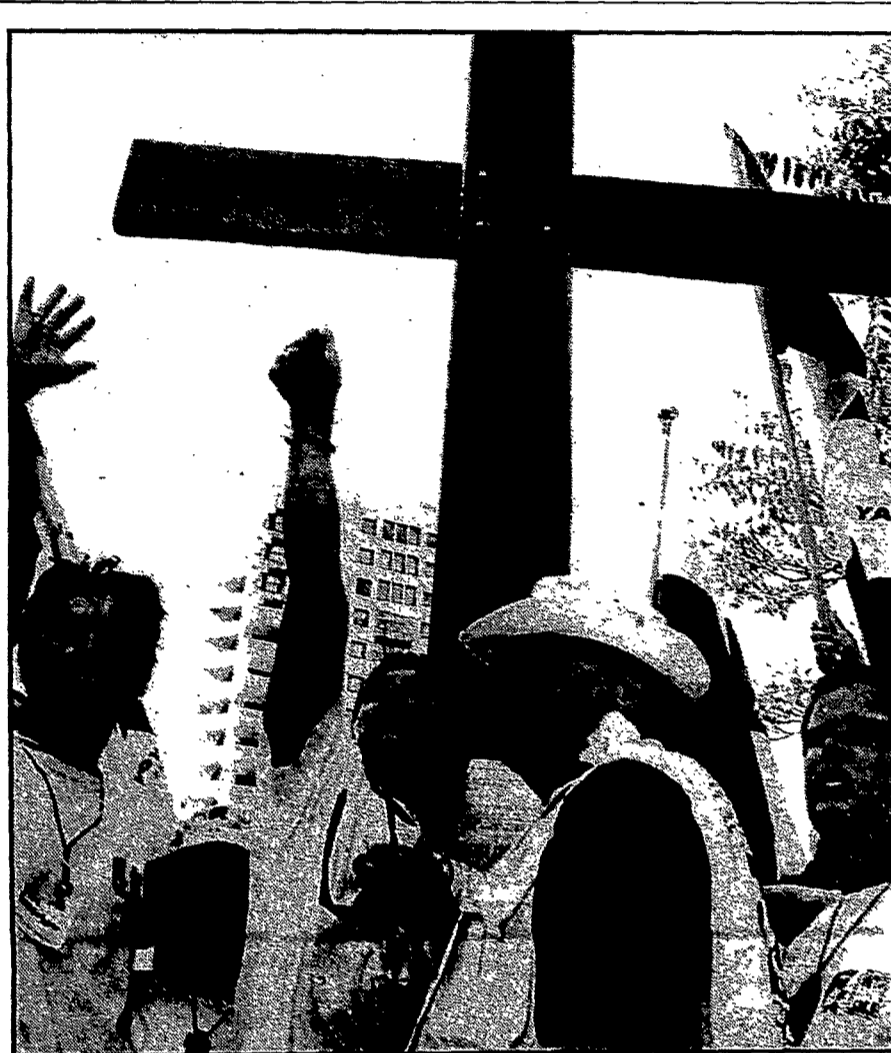
Benedictine Abbot Gregory Polan said there was "a lot of shock and sadness" at the violent deaths of Brother Damian Larson, 64, who was known as the "weather monk" at the abbey, and Father Philip Schuster, the retired chaplain at St. Francis Hospital in Maryville, who was in his

80s.

The gunman, who was identified by police only as a 71-year-old man from Kearney, Mo., was found dead in a chapel at the abbey with two weapons, an AK-47 and a sawed off .22-caliber rifle.

Abbot Polan said he was shown a driver's license picture of the gunman and "we have no sense of who this man is."

The wounded — both believed to be priests — were being treated at local hospitals.



Reuters/CNS

Cross bearers reach Toronto

World Youth Day cross bearers, completing the final leg of their pilgrimage across Canada, celebrate after bringing the cross to St. Michael's Cathedral in Toronto June 9. The city will host the international gathering of Catholic youths in late July, with Pope John Paul II celebrating the closing vigil and Mass.

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