

# WORLD & NATION

## More priests removed; one laicized

By Jerry Filteau  
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — A former St. Louis pastor became possibly the first U.S. priest since the bishops' Dallas meeting to be laicized by the pope because of sexual abuse.

Also, a prominent canon law professor and former religious-order provincial teaching in Canada resigned Aug. 6 and said he will seek laicization.

A day earlier a North Carolina priest was indicted on a charge of indecency with a minor, and a day later a priest long out of ministry in Kentucky was arrested on fresh abuse charges.

A pastor in Virginia was removed and barred from ministry over abuse in the 1970s, and a priest in Hawaii was permanently removed after a second complaint against him.

The Aug. 7 cover story of a Louisiana weekly newspaper, *The Times of Acadiana*, was devoted to an investigative report on sexual abuse of children by nuns.

Voice of the Faithful, a lay Catholic movement started in the wake of the Boston abuse scandal, grew as new local groups continued to organize or meet to discuss issues in other parts of the country.

In Boston, Superior Court Judge Constance M. Sweeney Aug. 7 concluded the trial phase of a case to determine whether a \$15 million to \$30 million sexual-abuse settlement plan between church officials and 86 alleged victims had reached the stage of a binding contract before the agreement fell apart. She gave lawyers for the two sides until Aug. 30 to file post-trial briefs.

The St. Louis Archdiocese said Aug. 7 that it recently received word Pope John Paul II has laicized Joseph D. Ross. Archbishop Justin F. Rigali initiated the laicization proceedings at the request of Ross after removing him from parish ministry.

Ross — who had pleaded guilty in 1988 to a misdemeanor sexual-abuse charge but had been restored to ministry following an extensive treatment program — was one of several priests placed on administrative leave in March when Archbishop Rigali instituted a stricter policy against parish or other ministry by priests with substantiated claims of child sexual abuse against them.

Several other allegations of sexual abuse by Ross were presented to the archdiocese following his removal, archdiocesan spokesman Jim Orso said.

Archbishop Rigali initiated laicization proceedings in March at the priest's request, well before the mid-June meeting in Dallas at which the U.S. bishops adopted their "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," but Ross appeared to be the first U.S. priest whose laicization has been publicly announced since then. The charter sets a national policy barring any priest who has molested a minor from any further ministry and calling for

those priests to be laicized, unless circumstances such as old age or ill health call for a less stringent measure.

The archdiocesan statement on Ross said, "Laicization, which is given by the pope, means that a priest has been definitively returned to the status of a layman, is dispensed from all the obligations that he assumed by sacred orders, and that a diocese no longer has responsibility for his support."

On Aug. 6 Father John M. Huels, a prominent canon lawyer and former U.S. provincial superior of the Servites, took a medical leave of absence as professor and vice dean of the canon law faculty at St. Paul University in Ottawa and said he would seek laicization.

When Michael J. Bland of Chicago, a former Servite priest and an eloquent spokesman for abuse survivors, addressed the U.S. bishops' meeting in Dallas, he talked of his abuse as a teenager by a priest, whom he did not name at the time. Bland, now a member of the bishops' National Review Board on sexual abuse, confirmed to Catholic News Service that Father Huels was the priest to whom he had been referring.

In the Diocese of Charlotte, N.C., Father

Richard Farwell was indicted Aug. 6 on a felony count of indecency with a boy who was between 12 and 14 years old when the alleged incident occurred in the early 1980s. The diocese had not deemed the allegation credible when it was made in 1999 but it placed the priest on administrative leave this April when the family reiterated the accusation. Shortly after that Father Farwell was fired from Food for the Poor, a Florida-based charity where he had been working.

In Louisville, Ky., police Aug. 7 arrested retired Father Daniel C. Clark, 54, at the Passionist monastery where he has been living without priestly duties since serving a three-month jail term in 1988 for sexually abusing children. He was charged with sexually abusing two brothers, now aged 11 and 12, at various times during visits to their family between 1998 and May of this year.

Father Clark is also named in 14 of the more than 170 sexual-abuse lawsuits filed since April against the Louisville Archdiocese. Another archdiocesan priest, Father Louis E. Miller, named in 66 civil suits, also faces a 42-count criminal indictment for sexual abuse of children.

## Shroud of Turin treated

TURIN, Italy (CNS) — Promising a press conference and extensive documentation in September, Cardinal Severino Poletto of Turin has confirmed he had authorized conservation work on the Shroud of Turin.

Workers, under the direction of a Swiss textile expert, removed 90 fabric patches that had been sewn onto the shroud in 1534 to repair fire damage.

The removal of the patches — and of a fabric backing initially attached to support the shroud — was carried out in almost complete secrecy between late June and late July, the Archdiocese of Turin said.

Many people believe the 17-foot-long cloth, which bears the image of a crucified man, is the shroud in which Christ was buried.

In 1988, scientists dated the cloth to the Middle Ages, but debate continues over the reliability of the tests and the authenticity of the shroud.

Cardinal Poletto told *Avvenire*, an Italian Catholic newspaper, that the work was carried out quietly "in order to guarantee the necessary calm for those working on it, as well as for obvious reasons of security."

The restoration carried out was authorized in writing by the Holy See, said the cardinal, the Vatican-appointed custodian of the shroud.

The interventions were urgent and necessary to remove impurities and residue which could compromise the conservation of the shroud over time and damage the viability of the image, he said Aug. 10.

The patches and the backing were important for keeping the shroud in one piece when it was kept folded or rolled up, extended for public viewing and then folded or rolled up again.

But since 2000 the shroud has been stored flat in a specially designed, fire-resistant case with temperature and air pressure controls.

With no wear and tear on the fabric and the best preservation technology currently available, the cardinal said, it did not make sense to continue risking contamination from the patches or from the dust trapped between the backing fabric and the shroud.

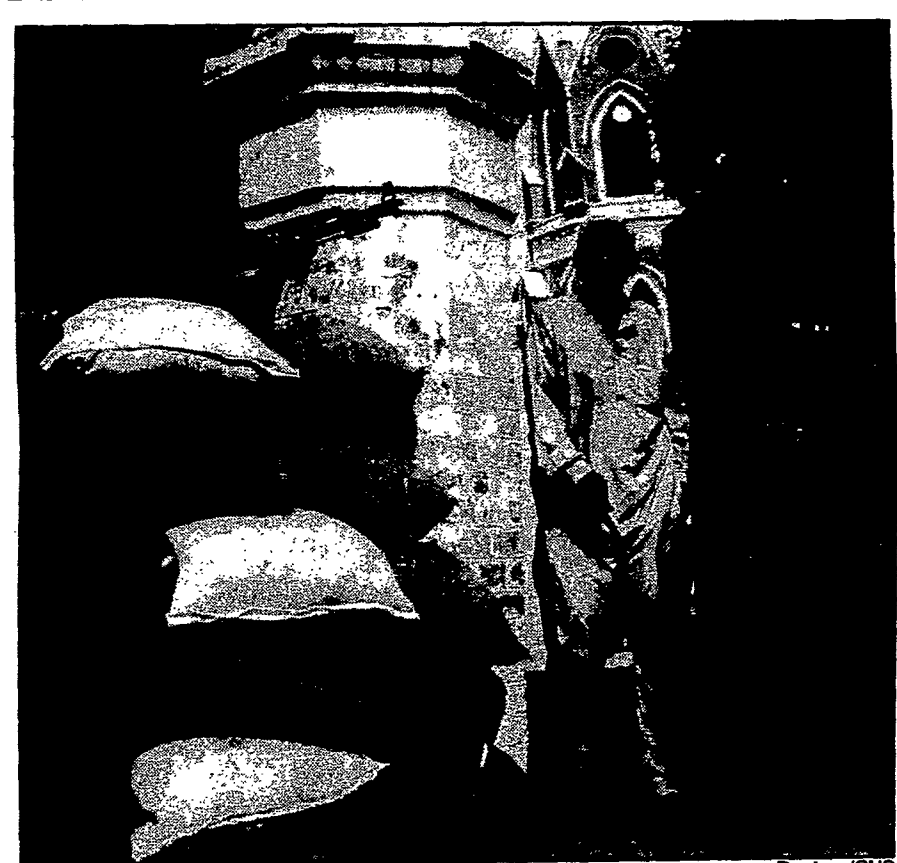
## Youth Day has deficit

TORONTO (CNS) — World Youth Day organizers in Toronto said they are facing a \$30 million deficit in the city's largest Catholic event.

The Catholic Church in Canada organized World Youth Day as an investment in the youth of the world. We knew that there was likely to be a shortfall and now we think it will be \$30 million. We appeal to anyone who wants to help with this investment," said Archbishop Anthony Meagher of Kingston, Ontario, chairman of the Canadian bishops' World Youth Day committee.

Canadian dioceses are assuming the shortfall. However, donations are being sought to offset their contributions, according to a statement released by World Youth Day organizers Aug. 9.

Officials said donors wishing to contribute using a credit card may call their toll-free number, 1-888-559-9550 (available from the United States Aug. 14) or mail a check to World Youth Day, 2002-115 York St., Toronto, Ont. M5S 1A5.



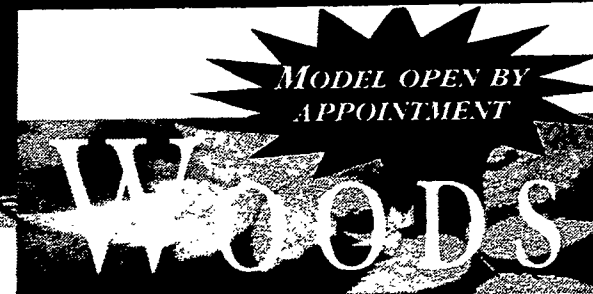
Reuters/CNS

## Pakistani church guarded

Pakistani soldiers guard St. Anthony Church in Lahore Aug. 11 after security was tightened around churches throughout Pakistan. Pope John Paul II condemned recent attacks on Christian institutions in the country.

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