

Archbishop, attorney meet

BOSTON (CNS) — Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley of Boston held a "positive, frank and informative" meeting with Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly Aug. 14 as part of the archdiocese's continuing response to the clergy sex-abuse crisis, spokesman Father Christopher Coyne announced.

"Archbishop O'Malley is hopeful that dialogue with the attorney general's office will continue and will foster the efforts of the archdiocese to bring openness about and healing of the scandal of clergy abuse of children, while promoting the protection of children in all areas of society," Father Coyne said in a statement.

The meeting took place three days after the release of internal archdiocesan reports detailing the handling of clergy abuse accusations and settlements made between 1994 to 2001. The previously confidential documents were disclosed Aug. 11 by the law firm of Greenberg Traurig, the Boston law firm handling 260 of the pending abuse lawsuits.

A steering committee of five lawyers met at the Greenberg Traurig offices Aug. 11 to begin review-

ing a \$55 million settlement offer by the Archdiocese of Boston to 542 alleged victims of clergy sexual abuse.

"We've got to get into the nitty-gritty of our analysis and how we're going to respond," said attorney Jeffrey Newman, who represented Greenberg Traurig at the meeting.

The newly released files document the sexual abuse allegations received by the delegate of the archbishop, who handled sexual misconduct by church employees. Published reports state that the office received 210 new claims against church employees between July 1994 and October 2001.

Though it is unclear when the actual incidents of abuse occurred, the attorney general's investigation concluded that no evidence of "recent or ongoing sexual abuse of children in the Archdiocese of Boston" exists.

The documents also show that the Archdiocese of Boston paid at least \$21.2 million in settlements to 149 victims of sexual abuse during the documented years. Insurance companies for the archdiocese paid out much of the amount.

Father Coyne told *The Pilot*,

Boston archdiocesan newspaper, that the settlements were not publicized because the policy at the time was based on what he called a "culture of protection" — "not only of the children, but of church priests (and) of people's reputations."

While some victims have challenged the archdiocese to improve the pending settlement offer, Father Coyne described it as fair.

"Archbishop O'Malley's offer of \$55 million aims to help bring healing" to the victims and the archdiocese, Father Coyne told *The Pilot*. He went on to describe the \$55 million figure as a "substantial offer, a good offer" and one that Archbishop O'Malley hopes "will result in an expeditious resolution" to pending clergy sexual abuse cases.



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Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley, center, shown at his July 30 installation Mass, recently met with Tom Reilly, Massachusetts attorney general, to discuss the sex-abuse crisis.

Deficiencies corrected at Auburn care facility

Medicaid, Medicare payments resume at Mercy Health Center

Medicaid and Medicare payments for new patients have been restored to Mercy Health and Rehabilitation Center in Auburn after a second survey by the New York State Department of Health found the facility had corrected all deficiencies cited in June.

Medicaid and Medicare payments for new patients at Mercy had been temporarily halted because the health department cited the center for 20 deficiencies during a June 2-6 inspection. The new survey took place Aug. 11-12.

In its June report, the health department had cited Mercy for several "G" violations, which are considered serious enough to "compromise the health of the patient," according to Robert Kenny, spokesman for the state health department. The health department approved a plan of correction from

Mercy on July 30, Kenny said, and Medicaid and Medicare payments were restored Aug. 12.

Mercy provides elder care and rehabilitation services for 240 residents. It is sponsored by the Sisters of the Third Franciscan Order in Syracuse, but the religious order announced earlier this year that — due to the declining number of sisters available to staff Mercy — it was seeking a new sponsor for the facility.

Robert Aims, Mercy's administrator, said that less than a handful of potential admissions had been affected by Mercy's inability to receive payments. In a statement, Mercy said it is again taking new admissions, and that the center appreciates the community's patience as well as the hard work of the staff during this "difficult period."

"We pledge to continue serving our community in meeting the mission of Mercy, to provide quality long- and short-term care with dignity, compassion and respect," the statement said.

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