

Bishop receives felony conviction

PHOENIX (CNS) — The criminal trial of Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien, former head of the Phoenix Diocese, has been difficult for the diocese as well as the bishop, said his successor, Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted.

"This has been a long and difficult process for everyone involved and I am grateful that it is over," he said at a Feb. 17 press conference held by the diocese after Bishop O'Brien's felony conviction for leaving the scene of a hit-and-run fatality.

Bishop O'Brien faces a sentence ranging from probation to 45 months in prison for leaving the scene of an accident in which Jim Reed, 43, was killed. Reed had been attempting to cross a dark road in midblock when the bishop's car struck him.

Bishop O'Brien's family and friends, as well as Reed's family, were in the courtroom to hear the verdict. Some met with reporters afterward.

Mary Anne McKone, a longtime friend of Bishop O'Brien, said she was floored by the verdict.

"He doesn't lie. He does not lie," she said. "He's innocent."

McKone said she couldn't see him serving time in prison. Under Ari-

zona law, a sentence of less than one year is served at a county jail, while longer sentences are served at a state prison.

That would be too much for the bishop, McKone believes.

"He's suffered enough," she said. "My God, he's been punished."

Reed's sister, Lillie Reed, told reporters she was pleased with the verdict, but "I was sad because I'll never get my brother back."

At the diocesan press conference, Bishop Olmsted said he hopes people will continue to pray for Bishop O'Brien.

Bishop O'Brien resigned as head of the diocese four days after the June 14 accident. Bishop Olmsted, formerly bishop of Wichita, Kan., was installed in Phoenix in December.

"Of all the days that I've been here, I don't think that there's been a day gone by that someone hasn't come up to me and said they're praying for him and praying for healing and hope for the Reed family and all engaged in this tragedy," Bishop Olmsted said.

After the retired bishop's sentence is fulfilled, Bishop Olmsted said, he



Reuters/CNS

Former Phoenix Bishop Thomas J. O'Brien, flanked by attorneys Melissa Berren and Tom Henze, stands as his Feb. 17 guilty verdict is read.

could see Bishop O'Brien having a continuing role in the Phoenix Diocese. Any restrictions on what he can do as a bishop would come from the Vatican, Bishop Olmsted explained. But otherwise he would welcome his help in the diocese.

"I'd very much like to sit down and visit with him about what he would be interested in doing," he said.

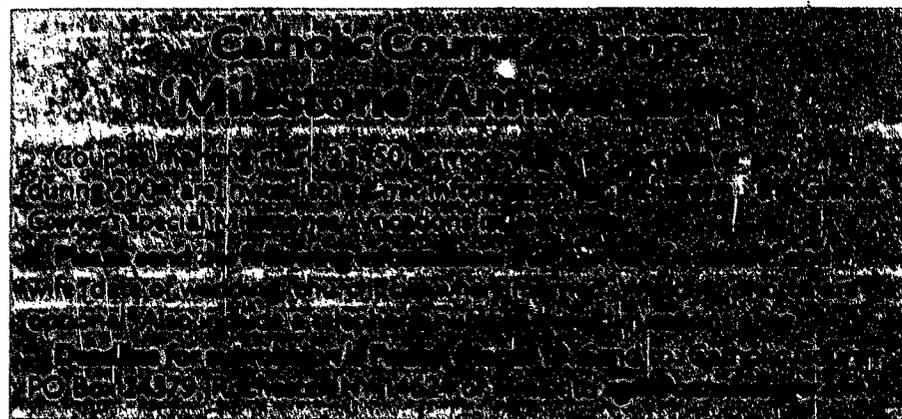
Another retired bishop, Bishop William Gomes of Poona, India, also lives in Phoenix and helps out with diocesan functions such as confirmations. Retired Archbishop Paul Marcinkus, former head of the Vati-

can bank whose career was primarily at the Vatican, also lives in the Phoenix Diocese, but rarely is involved with diocesan events.

Since his resignation as head of the diocese, Bishop O'Brien has continued to live in a house owned by the diocese. Bishop Olmsted said he saw no reason that arrangement couldn't continue.

"I am very happy living at the cathedral," he said.

Contributing to this story were Rob DeFrancesco, Brett Heising and Claudia I. Provencio in Phoenix.



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Gospel of Luke is focus of retreat

The Gospel of Luke is the focus of Our Lady of the Lakes Catholic Community's annual Lenten retreat, which consists of three sessions throughout the season of Lent.

The Catholic Church is currently in the point of the liturgical cycle that focuses on Luke's Gospel, so the Lenten retreat is meant to supplement the weekly readings at Mass and help parishioners understand and get more out of this particular Gospel, according to Father Robert Ring, pastor of the community.

The first session — "Luke and the Holy Spirit: You go, church!" — will be held Feb. 29 at St. Theresa's Church in Stanley after the 11 a.m.

Mass. During this session, Father Ring said, participants will have the opportunity to examine their own lives and see how the Holy Spirit is at work in each of them.

The second session — "St. Luke and Conversion: Jesus gives another chance!" — will be held March 14 at St. Januarius Church in Naples after the 10 a.m. Mass.

The third session — "St. Luke, Jesus and Mercy" — will focus on "Jesus' forgiveness and how we both experience forgiveness as well as offer forgiveness to others," Father Ring said. This session will be held March 28 at St. Michael's Church in Penn Yan after the 9:30 a.m. Mass.

The food, friendship, sharing, activities and discussions offered through this retreat are free, and all sessions are open to families and individuals of all ages.

"It's going to be intergenerational," Father Ring said.

For more information, call 315/536-7459.

— Jennifer Burke

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