

Cardinal says policy on sexual abuse won't be made before June

By **KEN MAGUIRE**
Associated Press

BOSTON — Cardinal Bernard Law said yesterday that the creation of a national policy on sexually abusive priests would have to wait until a Catholic bishops conference, dashing hopes for immediate action stemming from the recent summit of cardinals.

"As a group of cardinal archbishops, we were able to say that there were certain things that we felt we would like to bring to that June meeting," Law told the congregation at the beginning of Mass at Boston's Cathedral of the Holy Cross. "We were not there to make decisions."

Cardinals across the country are reporting back after a two-day gathering in Rome, where they agreed they would recommend a process to defrock any priest who has become "notorious and is guilty of the serial, predatory sexual abuse of minors."

During the short statement, Law did not address calls for his resignation. But he referred to himself and fellow priests as "wounded healers."

"These are not easy days to serve in the pastoral role that is mine," Law said during the special Mass dedicated to hope and healing.

"All of us are wounded healers," he said. "And when we remember that, we are able to be the people that we should be. . . . When we are not that, we degenerate into anger and division. And that's not who we are. That's not who God calls us to be."

Law also called for a special day of prayer, to be held during the Pentecost celebrations, which start May 10.

On morning news shows yesterday, U.S. cardinals who attended the Vatican meeting last week indicated there was no agreement on whether clergymen accused of sexual abuse should be expelled from the priesthood.

Speaking on "Fox News Sunday," Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of the Washington Archdiocese said he supported ousting any priest accused in the future but said the cardinals were divided about whether the policies should apply to past allegations.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago said there still needs to be some discussion on the "one strike and you're out" approach. Speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press," he said "mandated sentences" may not be the answer and that cardinals needed some dis-



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"All of us are wounded healers," Cardinal Bernard Law said in Mass in Boston, referring to the priesthood's sex-abuse scandal.

cretion. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, at its June meeting in Dallas, is expected to vote on whether to approve a national policy that will be binding on every diocese.

The sex abuse scandal began enveloping the church in January after revelations that the Archdiocese of Boston had shuttled now-defrocked priest John Geoghan from parish to parish despite repeated allegations that he was a pedophile.

Geoghan has been accused of abusing more than 130 children, and is serving a nine- to 10-year prison sentence for abuse.

The calls for Law's resignation increased this month with the release of 1,600 archdiocese documents that reveal the Rev. Paul Shanley's involvement with the North American Man-Boy Love Association.

In civil lawsuits, the former "street priest" has been charged with repeatedly raping boys during his tenure at a Newton parish in the 1980s.

Law has denied that his resignation was discussed at the Vatican and, through a spokeswoman, said he will not be leaving the archdiocese prior to a scheduled June 5 deposition in a civil suit filed by one of Shanley's alleged victims.