

SCANDALS IN THE CHURCH: Investigations

CINCINNATI

Subpoenaed Archbishop Avoids Testifying

By FRANCIS X. CLINES

Complaining of a lack of cooperation from Roman Catholic leaders, the Cincinnati prosecutor's office summoned Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk before a grand jury yesterday, but it put aside the subpoena an hour before his appearance when archdiocesan officials promised to deliver all relevant records about priests accused of sexual abuses, the Hamilton County prosecutor said.

"They can do it one of two ways, the hard way or the easy way," the prosecutor, Mike Allen, said after the grand jury heard from the chancellor of the archdiocese, the Rev. Christopher Armstrong, in the county's effort to delve into any accusations that church officials have collected.

Since the sexual abuse scandal surfaced in January in Boston, local prosecutors have become increasingly demanding of church officials for records and evidence of possible crimes. Archbishop Pilarczyk was the first national prelate known to have been subpoenaed in the inquiries.

"The archbishop did not testify before the grand jury," Mr. Allen said in an interview. "He voluntarily divulged the information we were looking for, but he is subject to recall and will be recalled if needed."

The confrontation between secular and church authorities narrowly spared the archbishop his grand jury appearance after diocesan officials came to terms with the prosecutor's office, Mr. Allen said.

The prosecutor is seeking all records on church inquiries into accusations of sexual abuses, including the names of the accused, the victims and the church officials who investigated them.

The archdiocese had no immediate comment about the subpoena or the appearance of Father Armstrong, a ranking administrator who answered prosecutors' questions for about an hour.

Mr. Allen gave no indication that Archbishop Pilarczyk, the archdiocese's leader since 1982, had been called because of any accusations of personal wrongdoing in handling the abuse questions.

"He was called," Mr. Allen said, "because in spite of its earlier assurances, the archdiocese had not cooperated before a grand jury investigating allegations of sexual abuses

A subpoena brings forth testimony and a promise of more information.

by priests."

Mr. Allen declined to go into detail about the three-week-old inquiry except to say it was concentrating on any reported abuses from "the not-too-distant past."

Ohio law allows accusations as old as 25 years to be investigated, legal authorities said.

Mr. Allen said the archdiocese had dragged its feet as earlier promises to cooperate went unfulfilled until he resorted to a subpoena.

"I'm a Roman Catholic and a prosecutor," Mr. Allen said. "And let me put my Catholic hat on to say there's a good way of facing up to an issue or

the other way of having an army of lawyers get in the way."

In recent comments about priests' reportedly abusing parochial school students, Archbishop Pilarczyk told *The Cincinnati Enquirer* that "the common wisdom" among church officials who dealt with the problem in the past was "to get the offender out of the child's life and tell the child to forget about it."

"And that's what we did," the archbishop said. "That's the way you dealt with those things."

"Was it a mistake? Well, it was a mistake in hindsight. It wasn't the right thing to do. It wasn't the adequate thing to do."

"Would we do it that way now? Certainly not, because we know more and we have more experience."

Archbishop Pilarczyk had previously said "fewer than five" priests with "substantiated" accusations from the past were among the several hundred priests who do parish work for the 500,000 Catholics in the archdiocese.

The *Enquirer*, like newspapers in other regions, has been investigating the problem and headlined an article on Sunday that reported that one priest had repeatedly been accused of sexual abuse over 15 years but that the archdiocese nevertheless assigned him duties that involved working with youngsters.

Mr. Allen drew a distinction between church officials in Cincinnati and those in Cleveland who, he said, have been more forthcoming about the scandal in dealing with prosecutors and the public.

Ten of the 340 priests in that diocese were publicly identified as accused in the past and suspended last week pending a grand jury inquiry.



Glenn Hartong/Cincinnati Enquirer, via Associated Press

The chancellor of the Cincinnati Archdiocese, the Rev. Christopher Armstrong, and lawyers yesterday on their way to a grand jury hearing on sexual abuse. Father Armstrong answered questions for about an hour.

The diocesan leader, Bishop Anthony M. Pilla, has appointed a commission of well-known residents to investigate the scandal and recommend how best to repair the damage, Mr. Allen noted.

In contrast to Cleveland, Cincinnati church officials specifically asked that the secrecy of their records be protected by means of requesting grand jury subpoenas for their submission.

That keeps the information out of the public record except in cases where grand juries decide that crim-

inal charges are warranted.

Apology for Priest's Comments

JOLIET, Ill., April 18 (AP) — The Joliet Diocese issued an apology today after a priest spoke sharply about people who had brought accusations of sexual abuse against his brother, also a priest.

"I don't have much sympathy for people who somehow couldn't stop whatever happened," the priest, the Rev. Richard Ross, told *The Herald News*. "I'll take all of these people

who were abused and I'll abuse them myself with a baseball bat."

The Diocese of Santa Rosa, Calif., placed Father Ross's brother, the Rev. Anthony J. Ross, on administrative leave while officials investigate accusations that he engaged in sexual misconduct with a teenage boy in Illinois in 1983.

The Joliet Diocese released a statement that said, "Our profound apology for Father Richard Ross's statements, which are absolutely contrary to our beliefs and sensitivities and all that we stand for."