

Milwaukee Archdiocese Shielded Pedophile Priests

Roman Catholic Church officials in Milwaukee vigorously shielded pedophile priests and protected church funds from lawsuits during a decades-long sex abuse scandal, according to hundreds of documents released on Monday.

The documents include letters and deposition testimony from Cardinal and Archbishop of New York Timothy Dolan who, during his time as archbishop of Milwaukee from 2002 to 2009, appealed to Vatican on numerous occasions to help address the ongoing fallout from the scandal.

The 6,000 pages of documents related to eight decades of abuse cases showed in great detail the Milwaukee archdiocese regularly reassigned priests who were accused of sexual molestation to new parishes and Dolan himself asking the Vatican permission to transfer \$57 million to a trust fund to protect it against court action.

In 2011, the Milwaukee archdiocese filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, citing the financial drain of settling sexual-abuse claims and acknowledging missteps by the church in dealing with pedophile priests.

The judge overseeing the archdiocese's bankruptcy ordered the documents to be released.

The Roman Catholic Church has been hit with a series of abuse accusations and scandals during the past two decades, in the United States and elsewhere. The scandals have cost the U.S. church about \$3 billion in settlements and driven prominent dioceses such as the one in Milwaukee, into bankruptcy.

One document is a letter that Dolan sent to the Vatican in June 2007 requesting permission to move \$57 million into a

cemetery trust fund in order to protect the funds from “any legal claim and liability.” The Vatican approved the transfer a month later, according to the documents.

During a news conference on Monday, Jeff Anderson, an attorney representing more than 500 abuse victims, said the money was to be used to “pay off some of the offenders to quietly go away.”

Dolan disagreed with the characterization of the fund in a statement released on Monday. He said it was a “perpetual care fund” from for cemeteries, not an attempt to shield money from bankruptcy.

Milwaukee is the eighth American diocese to declare bankruptcy, with the first three filed in 2004 in Portland, Oregon; Tucson, Arizona; and Spokane, Washington.

The documents also showed that when Dolan, the president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and the nation’s most prominent Roman Catholic official, asked the Vatican to remove priests, it was slow to respond.

In September 2003, Dolan informed the Vatican of abuse by Reverend John O’Brien, who sent a resignation letter to Pope John Paul II a month before, according to the documents.

In November 2003, when he had received no response, records show that Dolan followed up with more two accounts of abuse on the part of O’Brien, according to a document.

It was not until April 2009, that O’Brien was removed from the priesthood.

Documents also show the Milwaukee archdiocese transferring pedophile priests instead of removing them from the church.

In one such case, Reverend Raymond Adamsky received counseling and was transferred to 11 parishes in 34 years before being sent to serve as nursing home chaplain with restrictions on

contact with minors, after he was accused of molestation in 1961 and then again in 1983, the documents show.

The documents also detail the Milwaukee archdiocese, on a regular basis, requested priests accused of abuse be laicized, a process in which they are stripped of their powers and duties.

As part of their laicization, priests such as O'Brien were paid \$10,000 to start the process and \$10,000 during the process and, in some cases, \$1,250 per month for health and dental insurance, according to the documents.