

Pope Francis' Top Adviser Returning Home to Face Abuse Charges

A top Vatican official charged in his native Australia with historical sex crimes is on his way home where he is due in court, Australia's Channel 9 reported, as it broadcast video of the adviser to Pope Francis on a stop-off in Singapore.

Australian police charged Cardinal George Pell late last month, making the Vatican economy minister the highest-ranking Church official to face such accusations. Pell has declared his innocence and said he would return to Australia to clear his name.

Channel 9 broadcast video taken by a tourist of Pell in casual attire with a companion outside an ice cream shop in Singapore. The tourist told Pell his mother wanted to know if he was innocent

"Tell her that I am," Pell said.

Channel 9 published the video on its Facebook page late on Saturday and said it had been taken earlier in the day.

Pell is on leave of absence to defend himself and the video marks the first time he has been seen in public outside Rome since police charged him.

He is due to appear in a Melbourne court on July 26. Pell's Australian lawyer could not be reached by telephone and did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.
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