

Robert Geisinger, Vatican sex-crime investigator, tied to coverup

Jesuit priest knew about pedophile Rev. Donald McGuire as early as 1995, documents show

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An American priest named by Pope Francis as the Vatican's sex crimes prosecutor in September was among church officials who failed to report an abusive priest to law enforcement, according to legal documents reviewed by The Boston Globe.

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The Rev. Robert Geisinger, the second-highest-ranking leader of the Chicago Jesuits in the 1990s, knew as early as 1995 about abuse complaints against the Rev. Donald McGuire, and he advised church officials as late as August 2002 on how to discipline McGuire, the Globe reported in Sunday editions.

The newspaper cited legal documents including church records produced during lawsuits by McGuire's victims. Court documents also show that abuse complaints against McGuire date back to the 1960s, but the Jesuits failed for years to tell police.

'Why on earth would Francis pick a priest with a problematic track record on abuse in the U.S. to deal with abuse worldwide?' - David Clohessy, director of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests

McGuire, 84, is in federal prison serving a 25-year sentence. The former spiritual adviser to Mother Teresa, who once commanded a worldwide following as a gifted teacher and philosopher, is considered one of the most influential figures convicted in the Catholic Church's sexual-abuse scandal.

Geisinger declined to comment late Sunday, citing the late hour. He referred questions from The Associated Press to the Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi.

Lombardi said in a statement that Geisinger has a "solid and proven record in child protection dating back nearly two decades." Lombardi said that Geisinger, while serving with the Chicago Jesuits, "voiced concerns" about McGuire's conduct and was the canon lawyer who prepared the case that led to McGuire's dismissal from the clerical state.

"The Holy See fully expects Father Geisinger to continue to do an excellent job as Promoter of Justice, based on his prosecution record, his commitment to justice and his concern for victims," Lombardi said.

David Clohessy, director of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, released a statement Sunday urging Pope Francis to rescind the appointment of Geisinger as sex crimes prosecutor.

"Why on earth would Francis pick a priest with a problematic track record on abuse in the U.S. to deal with abuse worldwide?" Clohessy said. "Why choose one who so clearly and repeatedly refused to call the law or tell the truth about a notorious, now-imprisoned serial predator?"

Bishop Charles Scicluna, Geisinger's predecessor as chief sex crimes prosecutor, or "promoter of justice," told the AP that Geisinger's previous work in the church as procurator general in Rome for the Jesuits was excellent.

"He is a fine canonist dedicated to serving as a very strong promoter of justice," Scicluna said.

A Wisconsin jury convicted McGuire of five counts of indecent behaviour with a child in 2006, three years after two men came forward to report they were abused by McGuire during trips to Fontana, Wis., in 1967 and 1968. At the time, McGuire taught the boys at the Loyola Academy in Wilmette, Ill. He was sentenced to seven years in prison.

The Wisconsin case helped pave the way for federal prosecution and the 25-year sentence against McGuire in 2008 on charges of travelling outside the U.S. and across state lines to have sex with a teenager.

Federal authorities alleged in court documents that McGuire sexually molested boys in their teens and men in their early 20s throughout the 1990s and up until 2003.

Last year, Jesuit officials agreed to pay \$19.6 million to settle a lawsuit by six men who alleged they were abused by McGuire between 1975 and the early 2000s, according to the men's lawyer.

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