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LOCAL & STATE

# Lawsuit alleges church leaders failed to protect child victims

Cardinal Justin Rigali, Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua named as defendants

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — A civil lawsuit filed Monday against the Archdiocese of Philadelphia by a man who said two priests had sexually abused him as a child may signal a new era in church-abuse litigation in Pennsylvania.

The Roman Catholic archdiocese, long shielded by strict time limits by the state for filing personal-injury claims, has been spared the multimillion-dollar settlements that have crippled or even bankrupt other U.S. dioceses.

But the 28-year-old "John Doe" plaintiff who sued the archdiocese, its last two cardinals, its victim advocates and others had until age 30 to file the complaint under a 2002 law designed to give child sex-abuse victims more time to come forward.

"It's only now that he's been stable enough to weather a lawsuit," said the man's lawyer, Dan Monahan of Exton, who has been working with the client for a year.

A scathing Philadelphia grand jury report last week that charged three priests, a former priest and a teacher with abusing children or helping cover it up emboldened the victim, but it is not directly related to the lawsuit.

The priests charged with rape by the grand jury are not the same ones named as perpetrators in the man's lawsuit. However, both the grand jury report and the civil suit accuse Monsignor William Lynn, the secretary for clergy for the archdiocese from 1992 to 2004, with failing to protect children from known or suspected molesters.

"I think we have a window of opportunity here ... that the other suits have not had," Monahan said, referring to dozens of priest-abuse lawsuits tossed out of Pennsylvania courts previously, when such victims had to file suit by age 20.

The Philadelphia plaintiff, whose lawyer says has suffered severe psychiatric breakdowns and at least one related

hospitalization, accuses two priests of molesting him during his Catholic school education.

The first abuse occurred in the early 1990s, when seminarian Martin Satchell molested the second-grader at St. Aloysius in suburban Bryn Mawr, sometimes in the bathroom, the lawsuit said. The archdiocese had or should have had concerns by then about Satchell, who became a priest in May 1993, was sent for sex-offender therapy by year's end and left the priesthood by 2004, the suit said.

The boy asked a priest at his school for help two years later and was rebuffed, the suit said.

As a distressed high school freshman at Malvern Prep, he sought counseling from the Rev. Richard Cochrane, only to have Cochrane abuse him as well, the lawsuit said.

Both Satchell and Cochrane are among the 63 priests named as suspected pedophiles in a 2005 grand jury report, which excoriated church leaders in Philadelphia but concluded the allegations were too old to pursue under Pennsylvania criminal law. Home telephone numbers for the two could not be located.

The family of Monahan's client never believed the allegations he made against its beloved church.

"Our client has been shunned by his own family. That is a classic Philadelphia story," said co-counsel Marci Hamilton, who teaches at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University in New York.

The Philadelphia region is predominantly Catholic. Cardinal Justin Rigali, a named defendant in the civil suit, leads a five-county archdiocese with 1.5 million members.

Former city District Attorney Lynn Abraham, who issued the 2005 grand jury report, was among those who later lobbied lawmakers to amend the statute of limitations for child sex-abuse

victims.

Her successor, Seth Williams, issued last week's charges — including two felony endangerment charges against Lynn, the first church official in the U.S. ever charged with a crime for allegedly keeping problem priests in jobs around children.

The 60-year-old Lynn, now free on bail, will fight the charges on grounds he never supervised children and cannot therefore be charged with endangering them, defense lawyer Tom Bergstrom has said.

The archdiocese had no immediate response to the lawsuit, a spokesman said.

The lawsuit, like last week's grand jury report, also lambasts victim advocates employed by the archdiocese in recent years, saying they aim to protect the archdiocese, not victims.

Monahan said his client was hounded by them to sign a confidentiality agreement in order to get needed services, including reimbursement for his medical bills. He refused to sign, the lawyer said.

Dioceses have been paying out hundreds of millions of dollars in claims since the clerical sex abuse crisis erupted in 2002. Abuse-related costs for the church since 1950 have surpassed \$2 billion. Yet the Philadelphia archdiocese — led from 1988 to 2003 by Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua, trained in both church and secular law — has paid out just \$200,000, Hamilton said. The archdiocesan spokesman could not immediately confirm or comment on the figure.

"The Philadelphia archdiocese has deployed and employed the hardball legal tactics of hiding behind the statute of limitations," said lawyer Jeff Anderson, who has sued dioceses around the country and is involved in the lawsuit filed Monday. "They have effectively been able to avoid any financial or public accountability — until now."