Vatican



Archbishop Anthony Apuron of Agana, Guam, is pictured in a 2012 photo at the Vatican. (CNS/Paul Haring)

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Waiting for a Vatican verdict on allegations that he sexually abused several boys in the 1970s, Archbishop Anthony Apuron of Agana, Guam, attended one of Pope Francis' weekly general audiences in February.

The archbishop's presence at the audience Feb. 7 was not announced by the Vatican. However, Vatican media did not attempt to hide his presence in photographs and a video of the audience.

The Italian website, Vatican Insider, published a story Feb. 10 claiming that when Apuron personally greeted the pope at the end of the audience, he told the pope, "Holy Father, I wanted to see you before I die."

The archbishop sat in a wheelchair during the audience. When the cardinals and bishops present on the stage went up to the pope, Apuron walked with them, although with some difficulty.

Apuron continually has denied the abuse allegations.

Pope Francis had placed Apuron on leave in June 2016 after accusations against the archbishop were made public. The pope named an apostolic administrator to run the archdiocese for several months and then named Coadjutor Archbishop Michael Byrnes, a former auxiliary bishop of Detroit, to take over.

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The Vatican also appointed U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke, a noted canon lawyer, to be presiding judge in the canonical investigation of Apuron. Byrnes had announced in October that Burke and a panel of judges had reached a verdict, but as of Feb. 13, it still had not been made public.

In early January, one of Apuron's nephews publicly claimed the archbishop had sexually abused him in 1990.

In a statement Jan. 16, Apuron strongly denied the allegation. "As I lay sick after another surgery and I face the final judgment approaching evermore close, having lost interest in this world, God is my witness: I deny all allegations of sexual abuse

made against me, including this last one," the archbishop wrote.