News

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A priest who was once hailed as a champion of human rights in Chile was expelled from the priesthood by Pope Francis after being found guilty of sexual abuse.

The Archdiocese of Santiago announced Sept. 15 that the pope dismissed Fr. Cristian Precht from the clerical state with "no possibility of appeal."

The decree, sent by Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, confirmed "the dispensation from all obligations united to the sacred ordination of Father Cristian Precht Banados."

Precht was the first vicar of the Archdiocese of Santiago's Vicariate for Solidarity, an office created by Blessed Paul VI in 1976 to aid victims who suffered human rights abuses during the 1973-1990 dictatorship of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

The Archdiocese of Santiago began an investigation in 2011 into allegations of sexual abuse of minors and adults made against Precht. One year later, Precht was removed from public ministry for five years after the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith found the allegations "credible."

Although the Chilean priest issued a statement in 2013 proclaiming his innocence, Precht said he "decided not to appeal [my case] before the CDF and accept with obedience the sanctions imposed by my bishop."

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The announcement comes as Chilean prosecutors continue a nationwide investigation into alleged cover-ups of sexual abuses by clergy, including Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati of Santiago and his predecessor, Cardinal Francisco Javier Errazuriz Ossa.