News



Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, 2014 (CNS/Tom Tracy)



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The Boston Archdiocese will expand an ongoing review to now examine all three seminaries within its borders, following allegations that arose this summer of sexual misconduct and questions of moral conduct at one of the schools.

In August, Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley opened an inquiry into St. John Seminary, in Brighton, after two former seminarians posted on the archdiocese's Facebook page allegations of sexual advances, sexual misconduct and excessive alcohol consumption among seminarians. On Oct. 11, O'Malley announced that investigation will now include reviews of Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary, in Weston, and Redemptoris Mater Seminary, in Chestnut Hill.

In a statement, O'Malley said he decided to expand the scope after a consultation period about the seminaries, and in an effort "to meet the generally expected levels of transparency and accountability" in light of questions of confidence in church leadership amid the latest chapter in its sexual abuse scandal.

"I want to reassure the seminary communities and the wider public that these are institutions committed to the highest standards of integrity, respect and safety for our seminarians, faculty and staff," he said.

When asked if the expanded review was prompted by allegations of sexual misconduct or violations of moral standards at either Redemptoris or Pope St. John XXIII seminaries, Terrence Donilon, secretary of communications and public affairs, told NCR the archdiocese was not at liberty to discuss any part of the review.

A Boston-based law firm, Yurko, Salvesen & Remz, has been selected to head the review, led by former U.S. Attorney Donald Stern. The firm will take over for a committee comprised of Auxiliary Bishop Mark O'Connell, National Review Board Chair Francesco Cesareo and Kimberly Jones, head of the crisis management firm Athena Legal Strategies Group.

The committee's work to date will be given to the law firm, O'Malley said, which will be left to determine the review's timeline. O'Malley said he will release an independent report addressing any issues uncovered by the review, as well as steps

to address problems it identifies.

"It is important to recognize that this review is being conducted in a manner that will be thorough and respectful of all participants but also with as little disruption as possible to the academic year now underway at the seminaries. I want to assure all participants of the integrity of this process and my confidence that truth and full disclosure will ultimately unify us all," he said.

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On Aug. 10, the archdiocese opened an inquiry into St. John Seminary — days after John Monaco, a seminarian there from 2014 to 2016, recounted in a series of online postings that a fellow seminarian had made sexual advances by text to him and others, and that he witnessed "cuddling" and excessive drinking among his peers. Monaco said he also witnessed similar behavior at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, outside Philadelphia.

A second former St. John's seminarian, Andrew Solkshinitz, later backed up Monaco's account in his own posting on the archdiocese's Facebook page.

As part of the initial inquiry, O'Malley directed seminary rector Msgr. James Moroney to take an immediate sabbatical leave for the fall semester. Donilon told NCR that decision was mutually agreed upon by O'Malley and Moroney "to guarantee the independence of the process" and allow for the free flow of information. He added that if similar action is deemed necessary at the other seminaries, "we will proceed accordingly."

In May, the Boston Archdiocese ordained seven new priests, and it expects to ordain another 14 in May 2019. That class would represent its largest in more than two decades.

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