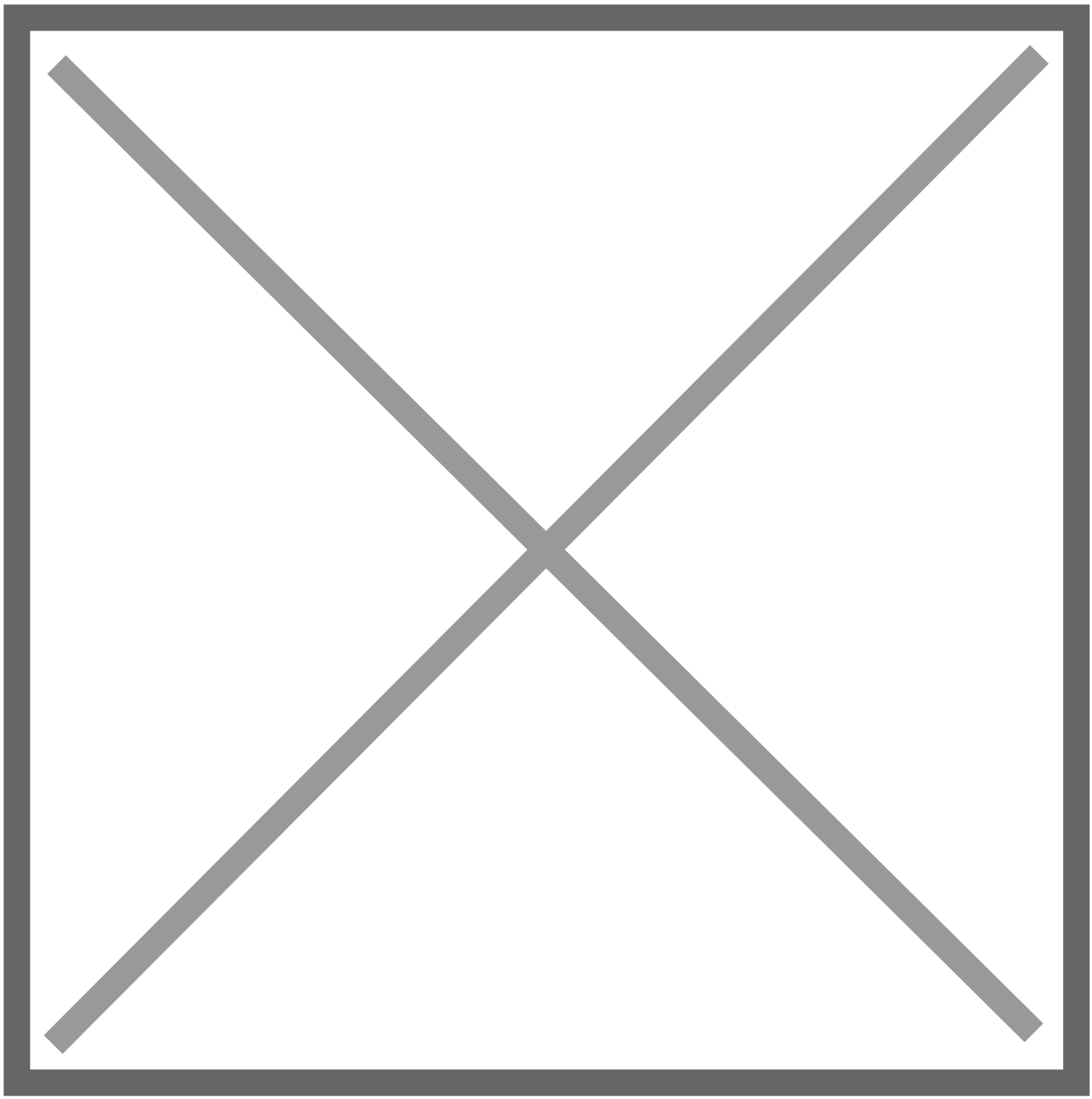
Vatican



Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris celebrates the annual chrism Mass at historic St. Sulpice Church April 17, 2019, in the wake of the massive fire that seriously damaged the historic Notre Dame Cathedral. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)



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ROME — Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris has sent a letter to Pope Francis effectively offering to resign following reports of a questionable relationship with a woman dating back to 2012 when he was vicar general of the Paris Archdiocese.

In an interview with La Croix on Nov. 26, the embattled French archbishop said he had "handed over my office to the pope to preserve the diocese."

His remarks come after a Nov. 22 article by the French magazine Le Point, which reported on correspondence between Aupetit and a woman with whom the archbishop admitted having an ambiguous relationship prior to him being made a bishop, while adamantly denying any sexual involvement.

The archbishop went on to state that he eventually informed the woman in question that the two should not have any further contact.

Following the report, Aupetit told La Croix that while he did not explicitly use the word "resignation" in writing to Pope Francis, that it would be up to the pontiff to determine his fate.

"The word resignation is not the one I used. Resignation would mean that I am relinquishing my charge," Aupetit said. "In reality, I am placing it in the hands of the Holy Father, because he was the one who gave it to me. I did this to preserve the

diocese, because, as bishop, I must be at the service of unity."

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A former medical doctor, Aupetit has led the Archdiocese of Paris since 2018 after serving as an auxiliary bishop of Paris from 2013 to 2014. In 2014, he was appointed by Pope Francis as the bishop of the Paris suburb of Nanterre, a post he held until being tapped to lead France's capital city.

In recent years, he has become a leading voice on a number of bioethical issues in France, including opposing efforts to legalize in vitro fertilization for single women and lesbian couples, as well as euthanasia. During his relatively short tenure, the 70-year-old archbishop has been forced into public view with regularity following the 2019 fire that nearly destroyed the city's iconic Notre Dame Cathedral.

Inside the Archdiocese of Paris, however, his leadership has been called into question, following two resignations of vicar generals of the archdiocese within a four-month span.

Aupetit is presently scheduled to preside over a Mass for adult confirmations at the Church of Saint-Sulpice on Nov. 27.