Vatican



Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris celebrates the annual chrism Mass at historic St. Sulpice Church April 17, 2019. Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Aupetit after a newspaper report criticized his management of the archdiocese and accused him of having an affair with a woman in 2012, an accusation he has denied. (Paul Haring/CNS)

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Vatican City — December 2, 2021

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Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Michel Aupetit of Paris, who had offered to step down to avoid "becoming a source of divisions," after an article in the Le Point weekly claimed he mismanaged his archdiocese and had an affair with a woman while he was vicar general.

The pope also named retired Archbishop Georges Pontier to temporarily lead the archdiocese as the apostolic administrator; the 78-year-old archbishop had served as apostolic administrator of the Archdiocese of Avignon from January to July after deep divisions and financial difficulties lead to the early retirement of Archbishop Jean-Pierre Marie Cattenoz.

The Vatican made the announcement Dec. 2.

Archbishop Aupetit, 70, had told France's Catholic La Croix daily Nov. 26 he had submitted his resignation to the pope and awaited his answer, adding that his behavior toward the unnamed woman "may have been ambiguous," but had not extended to "an intimate relationship and sexual relations."

"I've put my position in the Holy Father's hands to preserve the diocese, since I should serve unity as a bishop," the archbishop had told La Croix. "This is not because of what I should or should not have done in the past, but to avoid division if I myself become a source of division."

In its Nov. 22 report on the archbishop's "contested methods," Le Point said he had fueled a crisis with a "divisive and authoritarian" leadership style and had inadvertently revealed his "liaison with a woman" in a misdirected 2012 email.

The Paris Archdiocese confirmed to Agence France-Presse that there had been "no question of a relationship in love or a sexual relationship," adding that Archbishop Aupetit's letter to the pope was "not an admission of guilt but a gesture of humility."

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In a Nov. 27 interview with the archdiocese's Radio Notre Dame, Archbishop Aupetit said he had "managed the situation badly with a certain person," but had also explained the "error" to his spiritual adviser and church authorities.

"Those who knew me and shared my daily life will testify I did not lead a double life," the archbishop said.

He told Radio Notre Dame he accepted he faced "possible rancor" for various decisions in the archdiocese, but added that those working with him had been shocked by accusations of negligence in the Le Point report.

"I've found refuge in prayer and the support provided by so many Paris priests, seminarians and faithful, who've brought comfort and enabled me to stay at the helm in the last few days," the archbishop said.

"Today, as every day, I place my life in the Lord's hands, as I've done since ordination, hoping he will enable me to continue serving among my brethren."

The Versailles-born archbishop was installed in January 2018 to succeed Cardinal Andre Vingt-Trois, who retired in December 2017.

France's La Vie weekly said Nov. 26 the archbishop been praised when appointed, but since had gained a reputation as "hard man of the bishops' conference" for his opposition to liberal legislation on abortion, euthanasia and bioethics, as well as for closing down a "progressive Catholic pastoral center" in Paris in February.

Contributing to this story was Jonathan Luxmoore.