Vatican

Vatican News



Pope Francis during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at The Vatican, on Oct. 18, 2023. The pope on Tuesday, Oct. 24, 2023 accepted the resignation of a Polish bishop whose diocese has been rocked for weeks by reports of a gay orgy involving a male prostitute in a priest’s apartment. The Vatican didn’t give a reason for why Bishop Grzegorz Kaszak was resigning as head of the diocese of Sosnowiec, in southwestern Poland. At 59, he is several years shy of the normal retirement age of 75. (AP Photo/Alessandra Tarantino, File)

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The pope on Oct. 24 accepted the resignation of a Polish bishop whose diocese has been rocked for weeks by reports of a gay orgy involving a male prostitute in a priest's apartment.

The Vatican didn't give a reason for why Bishop Grzegorz Kaszak was resigning as head of the diocese of Sosnowiec, in southwestern Poland. At 59, he is several years shy of the normal retirement age of 75.

But his diocese has been in the spotlight for over a month after one of his priests was placed under criminal investigation for having allegedly organized a gay orgy at his apartment in Dabrowa Gornicza. Polish media reported that a male prostitute collapsed after overdosing on erectile dysfunction pills.

A prosecutor said the priest is suspected of "failing to provide assistance to a person whose life is at risk," for having allegedly tried to bar police and paramedics from entering the apartment.

Three weeks after the scandal erupted, Kaszak issued a statement calling for priests in the diocese to penance and urging prayers for "hurting and ashamed priests." But he also made clear that the priest involved in the scandal would be punished by the church if convicted because "there is no consent to moral evil."

"Anyone found guilty will be punished according to canon law, regardless of the verdict of the civil court. And I am very sorry to all those who were affected and very saddened or even scandalized by the situation in Dabrowa Gornicza," he wrote on Sept. 23.

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It wasn't immediately clear if Kaszak offered to resign or was pressured to step down. Still, the speed with which Francis removed him was unusual. Kaszak had been appointed bishop in 2009, after having served briefly as the No. 2 in the Vatican's family office.

The priest in question has not been charged. Polish daily Rzeczpospolita quoted a statement he issued soon after the scandal erupted, denying he had prevented paramedics from accessing his apartment and questioning the definition of "orgy."

"I perceive this as an obvious strike against the church, including the clergy and the faithful, in order to humiliate its position, tasks and mission," the priest was quoted as saying.

The Polish Catholic Church has been rocked for several years by allegations of sexual abuse of minors involving the clergy, scandals that have led to the forced resignations of several bishops and tarnished the church's reputation in the homeland of St. John Paul II.

The Vatican embassy in Poland said a temporary administrator, Archbishop Adrian Galbas of Katowice, would run the diocese of Sosnowiec until a new bishop is named.