News



Cardinal John Dew of Wellington, New Zealand, is pictured at the Vatican Oct. 14, 2015. The now-retired archbishop of Wellington was been cleared to return to ministry June 5, 2024, following a Vatican inquiry into a claim of sexual abuse against a minor during his time as an assistant priest in the 1970s. The church inquiry and an earlier policy investigation found no evidence to support the claim, which Cardinal Dew vigorously denied. (CNS/Paul Haring)

Marilyn Rodrigues

View Author Profile

OSV News

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Sydney — June 7, 2024
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

New Zealand's retired archbishop of Wellington has been cleared to return to ministry following a Vatican inquiry into an historical abuse complaint.

Cardinal John Dew stepped aside from ministry during a review under procedural norms established by the papal document "Vos Estis Lux Mundi" and an earlier police investigation into a complaint of sexual abuse against a minor during his time as an assistant priest in the 1970s.

The cardinal strenuously denied the allegation, and a 10-month police investigation concluded earlier this year without bringing any charges against the prelate.

"Cardinal John stood aside from all public church activities during the police investigation," Archbishop Paul Martin of Wellington said in a June 5 statement. "With the church's procedures complete, and no further action proposed, Cardinal John can resume public church activities."

Martin informed the archdiocese about the launch of the church investigation in an open letter March 7, following media reports about the allegations.

At the time Dew said he was informed of the allegation the day following the announcement of his retirement on May 5, 2023, as he had reached the age of 75, when canon law requires bishops to submit their resignation to the pope.

He said did not know the person making the allegations and never met him.

"The allegation against me is false, it may come from a well of anguish and grief arising from other reasons," the cardinal said in a March statement.

"I am acutely aware of how distressing this is for many: survivors who have put their trust in me, our church community, and my family and friends. I state once again that all incidents of abuse are wrong," the cardinal said.

"I hope and pray that all abuse victims will find peace and healing," the cardinal added.

Advertisement

In March, Newshub. — a New Zealand news website — reported that Dew had been investigated by police.

According to Newshub., the investigation was sparked by Steve Carvell, who alleged he was abused by then-Father Dew and another priest, Father Noel Donoghue, when he was a 7-year-old at St. Joseph's Orphanage in Upper Hutt.

Police investigated Carvell's complaint but did not bring charges, saying they were "unable to locate sufficient evidence."

Newshub. reported June 5 that Carvell told the news wire that he was never contacted by the Vatican as part of its review. "How can you possibly have a review, when you don't speak to the complainant?" he said.

Carvell claimed he was never informed how the review would be carried out or which officials in Rome were involved.

Dew was president of the New Zealand bishops' conference from 2009-2016 and 2020-2023. He served as archbishop of Wellington for nearly 20 years and was created a cardinal by Pope Francis in 2015.

"This has been a distressing situation and painful for all involved. The Church has provided pastoral care and support to those involved and continues to do so," Martin said June 5. "I would ask that we continue to pray for all those affected and offer support where we can."