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KC bishop may face another charge of failure to report child abuse

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NCR Today

KANSAS CITY, Mo. -- Bishop Robert Finn, the first bishop to be criminally charged in the decades-long clergy sex abuse crisis, may face another charge of failure to report suspected child abuse when he stands trial in September.

Prosecutors in Jackson County, Mo., who charged Finn and his Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo., diocese each with one count of failure to report suspected child abuse last October, have filed a request for separate second charges against both, *The Kansas City Star* reports this afternoon.

According to the *Star* report, prosecutors have also requested access to a "secret archive" of documents detailing the diocese's responses to child abuse allegations both before and after Finn began serving in Kansas City in May 2004 as a coadjutor bishop.

According to the *Star*:

The proposed new charges, which Jackson County Circuit Judge John Torrence still must approve, would add an additional count of failure to report suspicions of child abuse to those that Finn and the diocese already face.

A grand jury in October charged each with one misdemeanor failure to report charge related to how they handled the Rev. Shawn Ratigan between December 2010 and May 2011.

During that period diocesan leaders learned of dozens of lewd photos of young girls on Ratigan's

laptop computer. Ratigan attempted suicide after the discovery and received medical treatment and a psychological examination. Finn subsequently stripped the priest of his duties at a Northland parish, assigned him to an Independence mission house and ordered him to have no contact with children.

Finn's vicar general, Msgr. Robert Murphy, reported Ratigan to authorities in May 2011 after he violated the restrictions Finn placed on him.

The new charges would not allege any new facts about conduct attributable to either Finn or the diocese. Rather, the new charges would subdivide the existing charges into two distinct periods in which Finn and the diocese allegedly should have reported Ratigan to state child abuse and neglect investigators.

The first period would cover Dec. 17, 2010, to Feb. 10, 2011, when the church learned of the photographs, Ratigan attempted suicide and he was sent for medical treatment.

The second period would begin on Feb. 11, 2011, the date Finn sent Ratigan a letter outlining restrictions on his conduct and May 18, after Murphy notified police.

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Prosecutors also want the diocese to turn over a broad swath of records detailing how it has handled child abuse allegations received since Finn was ordained coadjutor bishop on May 3, 2004. Those records would include:

- All documents related to reports of child abuse received since May 2004, including records of the diocesan response team and Independent Review Board.
- Reports of prior concerns alleged against perpetrators mentioned in those post-2004 records.
- And all other relevant records kept in the diocese's 'secret archives,' as so described in canon law.

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