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# Report that pope to exile Law 'totally false,' Vatican says

John L. Allen Jr. | Mar. 16, 2013 NCR Today
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Reports that Pope Francis has ordered Cardinal Bernard Law to stay away from the Basilica of St. Mary Major and is about to ship him off to a monastery are ?completely and totally false,? according to a Vatican spokesperson.

During a press briefing on Thursday about Pope Francis? visit to St. Mary Major, one of the four pontifical basilicas in Rome, Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi said that Law had briefly greeted Francis and then exited the scene.

The Italian newspaper *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, however, reported that Francis had told Law to stop appearing in public at the basilica, where he retired as Archpriest in November 2011. The report also said that the new pope, ?as his first act of purification,? is preparing to dispatch the 81-year-old Law to a cloistered monastery.

Basilian Fr. Thomas Rosica, who?s acting as an assistant Vatican spokesperson during the papal transition, told *NCR* today that those reports are ?completely and totally false.?

Law, of course, resigned as Archbishop of Boston in December 2002 at the peak of the sexual abuse scandals in the United States. His appointment as Archpriest of St. Mary Major in 2004 brought criticism from advocates for abuse victims.

However the new pope decides to deal with Law, there?s no doubt that recovery from the abuse scandals will be high on his to-do list.

While then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio doesn?t have an extensive track record on the church?s abuse scandals, his election as pope was welcomed by the Survivors? Network of those Abused by Priests, largely on the strength of the fact that he doesn?t come out of the Roman Curia.

The new pope has been outspoken on the broader issue of the sexual exploitation of children in society.

?In this city, there are many girls who stop playing with dolls to enter the dump of a brothel because they were stolen, sold, betrayed,? he said in 2011, referring to Buenos Aires.

?Women and girls are kidnapped, and they are subjected to use and abuse of their body; they are destroyed in their dignity,? he said. ?The flesh that Jesus assumed and died for is worth less than the flesh of a pet. A dog is cared for better than these slaves of ours, who are kicked, who are broken.?

**(Follow John Allen on Twitter: @JohnLAllenJr)**

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