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St. Luke Institute president resigns as investigation continues in New Hampshire

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Silver Spring, Md.

Msgr. Edward Arsenault, president and CEO of St. Luke Institute in Silver Spring, has resigned in the wake of an investigation into an alleged inappropriate adult relationship and the uncovering of possible illegal financial dealings in the diocese of Manchester, N.H.

The resignation of Arsenault, a priest of the Manchester diocese, was effective May 3. It was announced in statements issued by the institute and the diocese.

The investigation does not involve St. Luke Institute, a treatment facility for Catholic clergy and religious, the institute said in its statement.

Arsenault held senior positions in the diocese from January 1999 to February 2009 and was the diocese's principal spokesman at the height of the clergy sexual abuse scandal a decade ago. He joined St. Luke Institute in October 2009.

Jane Young, associate attorney general in New Hampshire, said her office began its investigation in late April and will look at the entire period of Arsenault's employment in diocesan offices.

The diocese said it opened its investigation after receiving allegations of the relationship and that the review "discovered evidence suggesting improper financial transactions by Arsenault involving diocesan funds."

Diocesan officials turned to the office of New Hampshire Attorney General Michael Delaney when they realized that the financial transactions may have been illegal, the statement said. The diocese is cooperating with the attorney general's investigators.

The diocese also said Arsenault agreed to refrain from all public ministry while the investigation continues.

Msgr. Stephen Rossetti, a licensed psychologist and clinical associate professor of pastoral studies at The Catholic University of America in Washington, will serve as interim president of the institute. He was the institute's president from 1996 to 2009.

Sheila Harron, a psychologist who has worked at the institute for 18 years, will serve as interim CEO.

This is very difficult news and we are keeping this situation in prayer," Harron said in a statement. "St. Luke Institute has been in the process of expanding education and services nationally. We are committed to continuing to move forward, to providing high-quality care for priests and religious and to supporting a culture of healthy ministry in the church."

Bishop Peter Libasci of Manchester said in a statement that he was "committed to reviewing our internal

diocesan operations to ensure that any issues are identified and corrected, as necessary."

"We will do this in the light of day. In the meantime, we will be cooperating fully with the attorney general's investigation," he said.

David Clohessy, director of the Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests, said the organization was "saddened but not surprised" by the announcement. He urged people with information about the allegations to provide information to investigators.

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