

Catholics told to seek spiritual guidance on controversial bishop

Clerics, faithful dealing with presence of resident who faces charges of child pornography

The Ottawa Citizen

December 13, 2009

By Jennifer Green,

Ottawa Catholics held a rare, under-the-radar "day of prayer and penance for victims of child abuse (and) the sanctification of the clergy" to help deal with their awkward houseguest: a bishop charged with child pornography.

Raymond Lahey, former bishop of Antigonish, N.S., has been living among the 15 or so priests at Kilborn Place residence since the fall when he was charged at the Ottawa airport with possessing and importing child pornography on his laptop. He is to appear in court again Wednesday.

Lahey had hoped to stay in New Brunswick, but that didn't work out after a television crew followed him more than 50 kilometres toward Our Lady of Calvary monastery in Rogersville.

Since Archbishop Terrence Prendergast agreed to let him stay here, the archdiocese has received dozens of calls, some saying Lahey should leave and get a hotel room; others praising the priests' good will.

In the residence, the other priests aren't delighted to have him there, but neither are they frosty, said a church official.

Last Friday, the archbishop wrote on his blog, "After the arrest of Bishop Lahey ... some of our priests got together to discuss our reactions, the impact on our lives and what we could do in response.

"Among other things, we decided to hold a day of prayer and penance for victims of clergy abuse, for the sanctification of the clergy ... and for the Church in this difficult hour."

Catholics were invited to fast, say the rosary, or the Divine Mercy chaplet (a variation on the rosary) go to confession, or Mass. On Dec. 4, services were held at the cathedral and

at the diocesan centre on Kilborn Place. It's not known how many churches or individuals took part.

Archbishop James Weisgerber, who speaks on child abuse cases for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, said Lahey "has a right to human dignity," especially as he has not been convicted.

In terms of pornography, Weisgerber said, "it's a wake-up call for the country. When I was a young man, if people wanted pornography (they) had to put on a trench coat and go to the drug store, and deal with the humiliation of it. Well, now it's piped into your home."

It is destructive for both the people portrayed and those viewing it, albeit in different ways, he added.

Customs authorities flagged Lahey, 69, when he landed at the Ottawa airport because his passport revealed extensive travel to countries notorious as sources of the illicit material, a court document alleges.

Before he resigned, Lahey had overseen a historic, \$15-million, out-of-court settlement with people who were sexually abused as children by a former priest in the diocese.

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Your Comments

Littlebird

December 17, 2009 - 9:15 PM

It is about time that the fruits of the Catholic Church are finally being exposed! Making such an investigation public knowledge is a welcome step! And as far as a governmental apology is concerned, better late than never! However, an apology only has as much force as the action that follows it. May we look forward to a new wind blowing in the area of public service? Too bad past wrongs have not been compensated. Wouldn't that show seriousness of intent? A true and lasting change in society requires self-analysis. So, before everything is relegated to yesterday's news, wouldn't it bring healing to ask the question "why"? Why was such a perversion covered up for so long by an organization that claims to be the guardian of Christian ethics and morals? And why was this allowed by the authorities for so long? Were church and state in each others pockets? The harm to society is immeasurable! Who can gauge the crumbling ethics and morals in society and the increasing cynicism because of such conduct? And what about the victims and their families who were deeply and emotionally traumatized?! And let us not forget the alienation from God in society caused by such "bastions" of religious faith! Where

does the responsibility lie for all this? Enforced celibacy has no biblical foundation at all!
Why was it instituted in the first place?!

What would Jesus of Nazareth say if He came to the Earth and saw what the church – which claims to speak for Him – has made of His life's work?

A move has been made by a small group of people against such shameful sham Christianity. They've put out a website and call themselves "The Free Christians for the Christ of the Sermon on the Mount in All Cultures Worldwide." At this website they announce a lawsuit against the Catholic Church – of all places, in Germany, a bastion of the Catholic institution! And the sexual abuse of young people is one of the reasons they give for having taken such a step. As they put it, they do not want to remain silent anymore on the "brazen labelling fraud," with which Christ is mocked and His name abused to such an extent. They demand that the Archbishopric in Freiburg, headed by Zollitsch, and representing the Catholic Church in its totality, be enjoined from calling itself "Christian."

As a Christian, I fully support this and consider it high time that someone calls a spade a spade. Nothing against the sincere folk and priests who work hard and honestly, upholding the ideals of a Christian life. But as an institution, it has taken on a life of its own, and one could indeed ask if there is anything Christian about it! I commend the courage of these people to call the Church to task. Perhaps your readers would like to check them out: www.christus-oder-kirche.de/.../index.php.

There seems to be a grassroots movement to bring this up for discussion on the internet. Surely this could be very healthy for our society.

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Reality

December 14, 2009 - 8:06 PM

Time to declare the catholic church a dangerous offender and ban the organization in Canada.

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Shanda Leer

December 14, 2009 - 5:28 PM

Note WHY it says he was flagged for a search - because of extensive traveling to countries where child pornography is MADE. This man wasn't just having child porn "piped into his home". He was traveling overseas to sexually abuse children himself. Nobody seems to be addressing THAT.

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salt and light

December 14, 2009 - 12:39 PM

"controversial bishop"? I see nothing controversial about him.

The Bible is very clear and blunt about such people - they are called wolves in sheep's clothes.

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Jim

December 14, 2009 - 12:39 AM

A pervert is a pervert is a pervert. Amen!

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Hazel

December 13, 2009 - 10:37 PM

Reading a lot of anger, Prayer does Work, knucklehead, The prayers confessions and Mass are for the abused and abusers. I salute the decision, let's see if we were to discover one of our own family was accused, how would we feel? Most of those who write nasty messages have something to hide.

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Jack

December 13, 2009 - 10:23 PM

I suffer every day... I was abused... I am lost and don't know how to deal with it... For close to 40 years now. I hoped it would go away, that I would forget but instead it keeps on getting worse. Please Bishop Leahy. Don't make it drag on. Plead guilty.

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Dan

December 13, 2009 - 9:53 PM

I agree with the comments. It is outrageous how they are acting and continue to hide this problem. However, prayer is not a waste for those who believe. I do belong to an "organized religion" but not Roman Catholic. Our clergy marry and have their own family. Prayer and penance is not a waste. One thing does not deny the urgency of the other one.

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SMPTURLISH

December 13, 2009 - 8:42 PM

What priests around the world should be calling for is an investigation of the hierarchy from the top down which has so enabled and protected clerical sexual predators or children, young people and vulnerable adults.

One cannot help but notice that the pope, once again, is saying how shocked he is with what is in the Murphy Report. I am too, just as I was shocked by the 2005 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA Grand Jury Report on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, just as shocked as I was when the Boston documents came out, the 12,000 pages of documents from the Bridgport, Connecticut which that diocese has been fighting for seven years.

No, a letter from the pope is insufficient. This is not something that fell from the sky, that the hierarchy has not known about.

What is truly the scandal is that such an overwhelming number of bishops and their auxiliaries have been involved in the conspiracy.

When will the pope acknowledge that? We have been waiting years for that in the United States while bishops here continue to downplay it, continue to oppose needed legislative changes necessary to protect all children.

Why, even in our own Catholic Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware, the church has retained a PR firm at a cost of over 100,000 dollars while it is defending itself in a Chapter 11 bankruptcy filing. Why does the church need a PR firm to tell the truth?

Sister Maureen Paul Turlish

Victims' Advocate

New Castle, Delaware, USA

maureenpaulturlish@yahoo.com

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Abelard

December 13, 2009 - 8:35 PM

The bishops protect themselves and never,ever speak about each other except in glowing terms. They defrocked Prince and if they don't defrock Lahey then the jig is really up.From the news stories he's been at this for years so a lot of clergy covered up. Lahey should be removed to an apartment and not left among clergy at this residence who don't want him there.Send him to a Jesuit house

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Dave MacDonald

December 13, 2009 - 8:25 PM

The Archbishop of Ottawa has shown tremendous strength, leadership and courage in this matter. While many would like to tarnish all priests and bishops with the same brush, based on the evil actions of some, the vast majority of priests serve the community with love and dedication and this is something we should all be grateful for. It appears that those who are blinded by hate have forgotten some of the basic Canadian principles, the presumption of innocence, and prejudging people based on their religious beliefs.

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Ray

December 13, 2009 - 7:59 PM

I would be impressed if the priests (or Bishops!) announced that THEY as a group were going to fast (NO FOOD) and put on sackcloth or some other penitential sign for a day.

Why tell the people to do it? The people are doing penance enough putting up with all these revelations.

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jill jones

December 13, 2009 - 7:52 PM

If you think it doesn't happen in other churches you are mis informed not that it makes what was done to the victims any less sickening

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Harold Woods

December 13, 2009 - 7:26 PM

So, the guy who speaks on child abuse cases for the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops can't distinguish pornography from child pornography ...

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Father Vincent

December 13, 2009 - 6:51 PM

The Archbishop needs to get real! He is praying for the clergy rather than helping victims. I cannot believe the arrogance of the hierarchy and the continued cover up.

Fortunes are spent in this country to stop allowing same gender marriage and or civil rights..but pray services for the abused...

Something very wrong here

Come Lord Jesus

Fr Vincent

Bishop Child Pornography Case Delayed

CFRA

16 December 2009

Daniel Prousalidis

There's a new date for the resumption of the case of a Roman Catholic bishop facing child pornography charges.

A lawyer for Raymond Lahey has requested more time to prepare his case.

So the next court appearances has been pushed to January 13th.

The 69-year-old Lahey was charged in September with possessing and importing child pornography. He's been out on bail and living in Ottawa since October 1st.

