

The picture Cardinal Keith O'Brien probably wishes he had never posed for: UK's top Catholic was long-standing friend of Savile

- Cardinal Keith O'Brien faces claims of inappropriate attention by four priests
- One unnamed priest alleges 'unwanted behaviour' after late-night drinking
- Another unnamed priest said he was 18 when 'inappropriately approached'
- O'Brien, 74, steps down as Archbishop of St Andrew's and Edinburgh today
- Will no longer travel to Rome to help elect successor to Pope Benedict XVI

By [Steve Doughty](#) and [Larisa Brown](#)

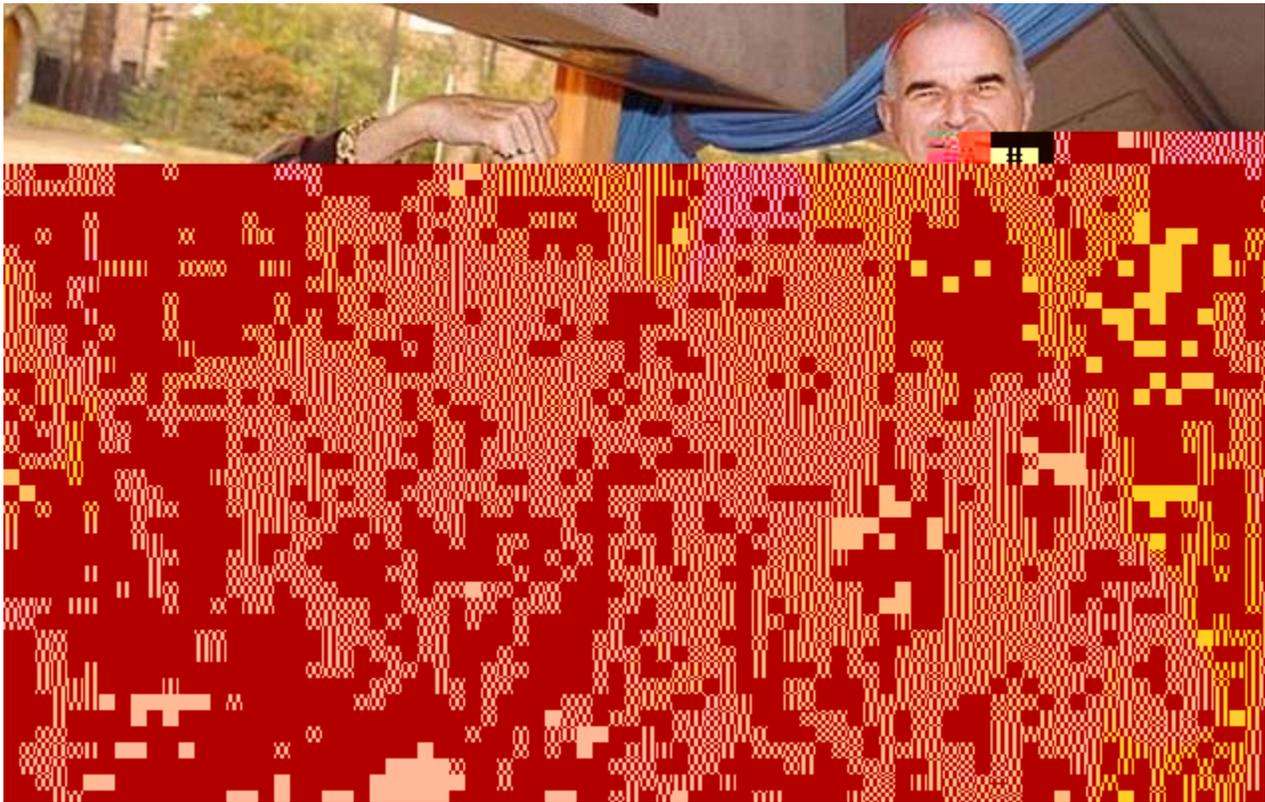
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Britain's most senior Catholic cleric - Cardinal Keith O'Brien - stands alongside his long-standing friend, Jimmy Savile.

Pictured giving a thumbs-up, he is seen grinning alongside the paedophile at a fund-raising event in Edinburgh six years ago.

The former leader of Scotland's Catholics stepped down yesterday amid accusations of 'inappropriate acts' towards fellow priests. He strongly denies all claims against him.

Cardinal Keith O'Brien was among many high-powered supporters of Savile who did not know about the entertainer's sexual abuse of children.



Friends: Jimmy Savile, left, and Cardinal Keith O'Brien were pictured together in Edinburgh in 2007 as the pair unveiled a £375,000 vehicle for the disabled



Resigned: The cardinal, who stepped down yesterday, was seen looking out of a window at his home in Edinburgh, Scotland, today

He met the former DJ and charity fundraiser in the 1970s when O'Brien was a priest in Kilsyth, north Lanarkshire, and worked with a friend of Savile's mother.

They were pictured together in Scotland in 2007 as the pair unveiled a £375,000 vehicle for the disabled.

When the Savile scandal emerged, the cardinal called for him to be stripped of his papal knighthood.

Following Savile's death, Cardinal O'Brien said: 'My friendship with Jimmy Savile developed over many years since I was assistant priest in St Patrick's Parish, Kilsyth.

'We were always trying to fundraise, not only for the parish, but for a variety of local and national charities and Father Denis had got to know Jimmy quite simply because of Jimmy's mother, "The Duchess".

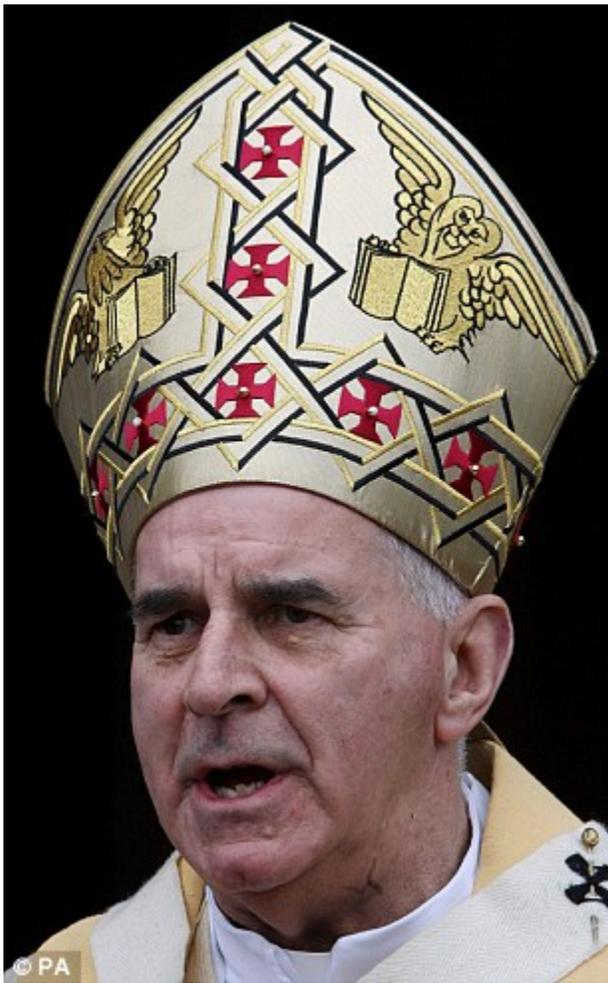
'It was Jimmy's fond mother who attributed the healing of Jimmy when an infant to her prayers to the Venerable Margaret Sinclair, a young Scottish nun.'

There is no suggestion that Cardinal O'Brien had any part in the Savile abuse scandal.



Pictured together: Cardinal Keith O'Brien (left) was among many high powered supporters of Jimmy Savile (right) who did not know about the entertainer's sexual abuse of children

The pictures emerged as Britain's most senior Roman Catholic yesterday apologised for his failures after being ordered to quit by the Pope as a further sex scandal swept the church.



Quit: Cardinal Keith O'Brien has resigned as Archbishop of St Andrew's and Edinburgh

Cardinal O'Brien said sorry as it was revealed that he must resign now rather than wait until his 75th birthday, which falls next month.

In a statement the Cardinal, 74, said: 'Looking back over my years of ministry: for any good I have been able to do, I thank God. For any failures, I apologise to all whom I have offended.'

The Vatican instruction follows allegations made by three un-named priests and one former priest who say that they were subjected to 'inappropriate' approaches by the cardinal 30 years ago.

The complaints were made to the Vatican's representative in London early last month – before Pope Benedict XVI announced his resignation, but after Cardinal O'Brien had made known to Rome that he wished to resign 'in view of his 75th birthday'.

The sudden departure of the cardinal leaves the church grappling with the implications of a new sex scandal affecting its senior leadership and denies British Roman Catholics any influence on the voting when 116 cardinals gather to elect Benedict's replacement next month.

The affair intensified the sense of intrigue and conspiracy that has grown around the Papacy since Benedict made the surprise announcement of his own decision to quit on February 11.

The dramatic move to become the first Pope in 600 years to resign has provoked intense speculation both on what influences may have been at work on Benedict and on what role he will play after he stands down.

A Vatican adviser in Scotland said the O'Brien resignation was 'shocking and sad' but 'unsurprising'.

Cardinal O'Brien's apology follows growing controversy over his leadership in recent weeks. The vehemence of his public stand against same-sex marriage led to condemnation by the gay lobby.



Staying away: Cardinal O'Brien, pictured with the Duke of Edinburgh and the Pope, will no longer attend the election to choose Benedict XVI's successor

However, in a surprise move just a day before the sex scandal broke, he upset traditionalists by calling for priests to be given the right to marry.

His immediate departure was set out in an announcement from the Scottish church yesterday morning.

Cardinal O'Brien said: 'Approaching the age of 75 and at times in indifferent health, I tendered my resignation as Archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh to Pope Benedict XVI some months ago.'

He added that he had been 'happy to know' that on November 13 last year the Pope had accepted his resignation, but that it would take effect at an unspecified later date.



Position: The archbishop was the head of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and the UK's senior priest

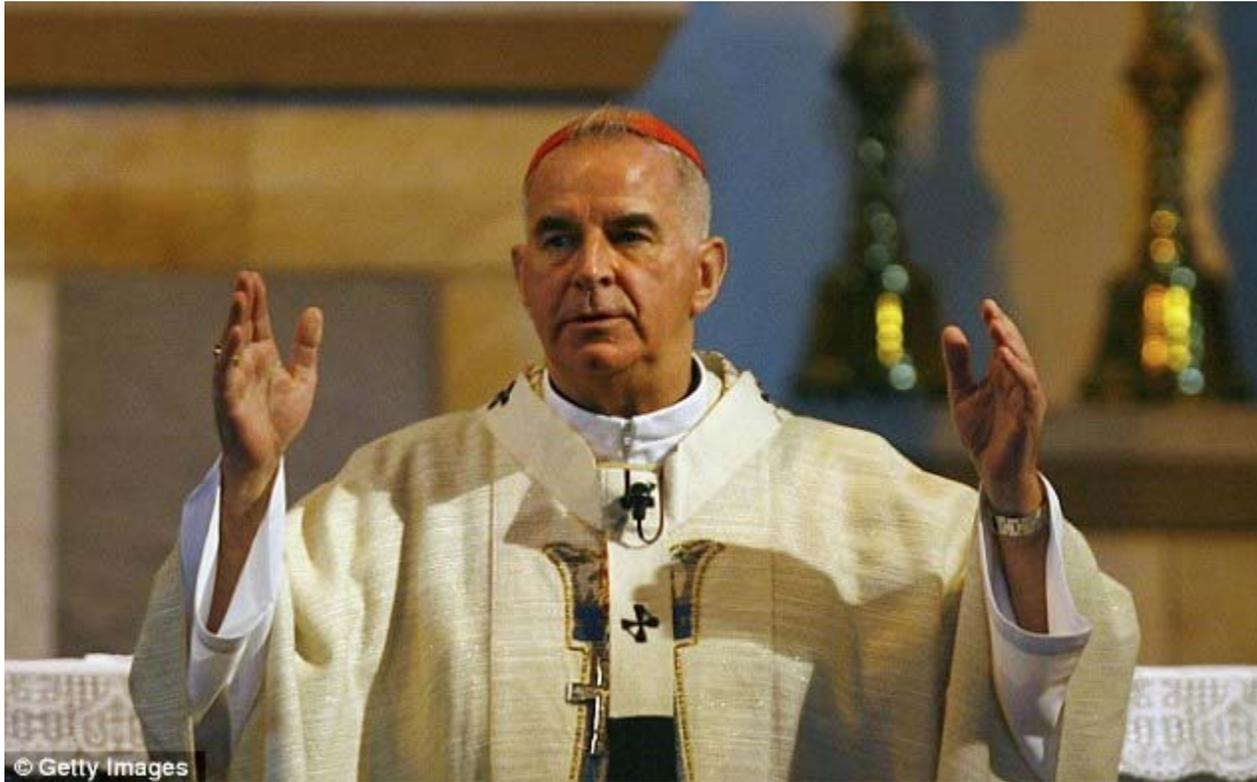
Senior church figures are expected to go at 75, but the Vatican often allows leeway of a year or two. Following news of the sex scandal over the weekend, the Pope gave Cardinal O'Brien no choice.

'The Holy Father has now decided that my resignation will take effect today, 25 February 2013, and that he will appoint an Apostolic Administrator to govern the Archdiocese in my place until my successor is appointed,' Cardinal O'Brien said.

The decision means he will no longer travel to Rome as planned to take part in the conclave that will elect the next Pope in March.

The Cardinal said in his statement: 'I thank Pope Benedict XVI for his kindness and courtesy to me and...I wish him a long and happy retirement.

'I also ask God's blessing on my brother Cardinals who will soon gather in Rome to elect his successor. I will not join them for this conclave. I do not wish media attention in Rome to be focused on me – but rather on Pope Benedict XVI and on his successor.'



Saying mass in Edinburgh: Cardinal Keith O'Brien in his role as Britain's most senior Catholic

Cardinal O'Brien, who on Sunday missed a mass in St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh that had been intended to celebrate eight years of Benedict's papacy, has contested claims of inappropriate behaviour made against him.

The claims were made to the Papal Nuncio, the Vatican ambassador in London, Antonio Mennini, in the week before the announcement of Benedict's resignation on February 11.

According to the Observer newspaper, one former priest claims Cardinal O'Brien made an inappropriate approach to him in 1980, after night prayers, when he was a seminarian at St Andrew's College, Drygrange.

The man, who is now married, says he resigned as a priest when Cardinal O'Brien was first made a bishop. He said in his complaint: 'I knew then he would always have power over me. It was assumed I left the priesthood to get married. I did not. I left to preserve my integrity.'



A second statement from another priest says he was living in a parish when he was visited by Cardinal O'Brien, and inappropriate contact took place between them.

A third man said he had had to deal with 'unwanted behaviour' by the cardinal in the 1980s after some late-night drinking.

The fourth complaint came from a priest who said the cardinal used night prayers as an excuse for inappropriate contact.



Retiring: Pope Benedict XVI delivers his blessing during his last Angelus noon prayer from a window overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican yesterday

A Vatican adviser in Scotland, Professor John Haldane of St Andrews University, said: 'The resignation of Cardinal O'Brien as Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, within a month of the date on which his formal resignation would normally have taken effect is both shocking and sad.'

'Given the nature of the accusations, however, and the publication of them over the weekend, ahead of the formal abdication of Pope Benedict later in the week, it is unsurprising that he has taken the decision to resign.'

Professor Haldane, added: 'The Cardinal could not but be mindful of the problems that would follow given the inevitable press interest created by the accusations, and he would not want that burden to fall upon the Church and the Pope at what is obviously a critical moment in the life of the Roman Catholic community.'

5M BRITONS UNREPRESENTED IN SELECTION OF NEW PONTIFF

The departure of the Cardinal leaves the five million faithful in Britain without a representative when the new Pope is chosen.

It will mean that the number of cardinals with the power to vote in the conclave for Benedict's successor is reduced to 116, with at least one other withdrawal a possibility between now and the opening of discussions in the Vatican next month.

There are some 750,000 Catholics in Scotland who would have been represented by the Cardinal as Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

More than four million Catholics in England and Wales will be unrepresented in the final reckoning because there is no qualified cardinal among their leaders.

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, who stepped down as Archbishop of Westminster in 2009, is 80, and so too old to join the voting bloc of cardinals. He will, however, travel to Rome to take part in advisory talks.

His successor as Archbishop of Westminster, the Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, has yet to be given a cardinal's hat more than three years after taking over as leader of Catholics in England and Wales.

Some observers believe this is because Benedict has been suspicious of what he sees as liberal tendencies among English bishops.

Another cardinal is under pressure to follow Keith O'Brien out of the conclave. Roger Mahony, former Archbishop of Los Angeles, who is being urged to step down by lobby groups who accuse him of covering up sex abuse by priests.

The conclave may now begin around March 10. The Pope's resignation takes effect on Thursday evening this week, 28 February.