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Roman Catholic Archdiocese backs out of compensation deal



Defrocked priest, John Geoghan

Once again, in the ongoing saga of the revelations of the perversity that lies at the heart of Roman Catholicism, the world has been presented with the true nature of what has been rightly called "the devil's greatest deceit." Following lengthy negotiations with the legal representatives of 86 alleged victims of child sexual abuse by a former priest of the diocese, the Roman Catholic Church in Boston, Massachusetts, has broken its word and backed out of a multi-million-dollar payout!

The report of the Archdiocese's finance council action was carried in the "Boston Globe" newspaper (www.boston.com). The council said the proposed settlement for the alleged victims of the now defrocked priest, John Geoghan, would leave the Boston diocese without money to pay other victims.

Mitchell Garabedian, lawyer for the alleged victims reacted furiously, accusing the Roman Catholic church of "re-victimising" them. "This is a disgrace," he said. "Are these people inhuman?"

It was the John Geoghan case which set in motion the sexual abuse crisis which has shaken popery in the US, and further afield, and prompted calls for the resignation of Boston's Cardinal Bernard Law. He has come under pressure to resign for simply moving priests, accused of abuse, elsewhere. The Cardinal said he regretted the council's decision. Explaining its decision, the council said that resources were needed "to provide a just and proportional response to other victims." The settlement reached in March, after 11 months of negotiations, is reportedly worth between \$20m and \$30m. Geoghan, 66, was sentenced by a court to 10 years in jail for having sexually abused a 10-year-old boy in a public swimming-pool in 1991.

As the council announced its rejection of the settlement, another priest, formerly of the Boston Archdiocese, Paul Shanley, who is 71, is to face charges of child rape in Massachusetts. "Father" Paul Shanley was arrested in southern California on suspicion of three counts of child rape. He appeared in court to waive his right to refuse extradition to the state of Massachusetts, where the alleged incidents took place between 1983 and 1990. The criminal charges in Massachusetts are the first to be filed against Shanley, who faces a possible life sentence if convicted. He is the focus of a civil suit brought against the Archdiocese of Boston and Cardinal Law, who are alleged to have failed to protect children from being abused by priests. Massachusetts passed a bill requiring clergy to report cases of suspected abuse to state social workers. The law was signed by acting Governor Jane Swift. Now congregational leaders, clergy and church youth workers have 30 days to submit any information about child abuse - regardless of when it took place - to the Massachu-



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sets Department of Social Services. Withholding information constitutes a misdemeanour punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.