

Statement On Cardinal Law's New Position

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"Why can't Vatican officials see that any position or honor afforded to Law will inevitably and needlessly cause more pain to hundreds who have been abused and have already suffered enough? The insensitivity of top church leaders in Rome continues to be alarming.

We understand that many in the hierarchy consider Law a smart man with some skills. We also know, however, that many in the pews consider Law a near criminal with major liabilities.

For the sake of hundreds of wounded abuse victims and thousands of devout Catholics, he should not be given or accept any further responsibilities in the Catholic church."

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Vatican appoints former Boston archbishop head of a Rome basilica The Associated Press

VATICAN CITY- Pope John Paul II on Thursday gave Cardinal Bernard F. Law an official position in Rome, naming the former Boston archbishop who resigned in the sex abuse scandal as head of a basilica.

Law will have the title archpriest of St. Mary Major Basilica, a largely ceremonial post often given to retired prelates.

The 72-year-old Law resigned Dec. 13, 2002, to quell an outcry over his handling of sex abuse cases. He was the highest-ranking church leader to lose his job over the scandal that began in Boston and spread to Roman Catholic dioceses across the U.S., plunging the church into an unprecedented moral and financial crisis.

He moved from Boston and became resident chaplain at a convent in Maryland, although he retained his membership on nine Vatican congregations and councils, traveling frequently to Rome. He attended a number of events during celebrations for John Paul's 25th anniversary as pontiff in October.

An archpriest is in charge of administration in a basilica, and has ceremonial functions. At St. Mary Major in downtown Rome, near the city's main railroad station, he succeeds 82-year-old Italian Cardinal Carlo Furno.

Boston attorney Mitchell Garabedian, who represents more than 130 alleged victims of sexual abuse by priests, said the Vatican was sending a bad message by giving Law a high profile new job.

"He apparently is being transferred to a position that is comfortable and appears to be some sort of reward," Garabedian said. "The Vatican either doesn't understand the problem of clergy sex abuse, or it doesn't care. That shows by this new prestigious post given to Cardinal Law."

The Boston Archdiocese was at the center of the national clergy sex abuse scandal following the release of church documents revealing that church leaders shuffled accused priests from parish to parish instead of removing them from ministry.

Law himself was named in hundreds of lawsuits accusing him of failing to protect children from known child molesters. Ten months after his departure, Law's successor, Archbishop Sean P. O'Malley, helped to broker an \$85 million settlement agreement with more than 550 victims of clergy sex abuse.

The Rev. Christopher Coyne, a spokesman for the Boston Archdiocese, did not immediately return calls seeking comment.

After becoming head of the nation's fourth-largest archdiocese in 1984, Law rose to become one of the pope's closest American advisers. Even after his resignation as archbishop of Boston, he retained the title of cardinal, leaving open the possibility that he could take another church post and retaining the right to vote in papal elections until he turns 80.

St. Mary Major is one of four basilicas under direct Vatican jurisdiction. It has an international staff of priests for the many tourists who visit the city.

No one answered the telephone at the basilica's offices on Thursday.