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Reports of sex-abuse complaint involving church, police surface

It's unlikely any investigation will be reopened

By LEN HOOPER
Staff Writer

The male victim of a sexual abuse about 20 years ago may have been paid more than \$30,000 in 1993 to drop his criminal complaint against a local priest.

Allegations that both Alexandria-Cornwall Diocese Bishop Eugene LaRocque and city police had some involvement in a settlement have been circulating for weeks.

The reports surfaced Wednesday in an Ottawa television news program.

The victim, now more than 30 years old, initially complained to police that he was sexually assaulted by a priest when he was between 10 and 14 years of age.

Acting City Police Chief Carl Johnston and former Police Chief Claude Shaver, who retired this week, both told the *Standard-Freeholder* in separate interviews Wednesday that a police investigation was opened early last year after



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— Former chief Shaver

the victim came forward with the allegations in December 1992.

Johnston, who began work in Cornwall this week, said he was told the investigation was dropped only after the victim withdrew his complaint.

The priest, who is no longer in this diocese, was assigned to a city parish at the time of the alleged assault.

Shaver said he doesn't feel it is appropriate for him to comment on details of the case without talking to Johnston first. "I'm no longer with the department," he explained.

However, Shaver absolutely denied rumors the department — and he

specifically — was involved in any settlement of a complaint.

"That is absolutely, totally untrue. It's complete bunk, ridiculous. There's not even a shred of truth to that," Shaver said.

"Remember, I came out in favor of naming child molesters who are released back into the community."

Bishop LaRocque refused to comment on the case when contacted by telephone at his residence Wednesday evening.

Johnston said it's unlikely the case against the priest would be reopened unless the victim co-operates.

He said it's all but impossible to convict anyone of sexual assault without the testimony of the victim.

A source told the *Standard-Freeholder* that during the police investigation of the priest, the victim stated he had also been assaulted by another Cornwall man.

But he did not want to pursue criminal charges against the man. So the priest was the only person to be the subject of an official police investigation.

Martelle said he would insist on an investigation of how the case was handled "only if the allegations warranted an investigation."

The source said that during the investigation, the victim told police he was negotiating with the church for compensation and that he might want to drop the case. The source said police were not happy with those developments, but that, without a complaint, they had no choice but to drop the case.

Bishop won't discuss sex allegations

By SULTAN JESSA
Staff Writer

Bishop Eugene LaRocque flatly refused on Sunday to discuss allegations of sexual abuse involving a Roman Catholic priest in the Alexandria-Cornwall Diocese.

He would only say any comments on this issue would have to come from the diocesan lawyer. But LaRocque would not name the lawyer.

On Friday, the bishop issued a four-page statement in which he said he was "prepared to co-operate with police and other agencies" in dealing with any allegations of sexual abuse by clergy.

"If there are victims of sexual abuse by clergy, we want to know about it," the bishop said in that prepared statement.

The statement marked the first time LaRocque addressed reports that a male victim of sexual abuse about 20 years ago may have been paid \$32,000 in 1993 to drop a criminal complaint against a priest, who no longer lives in the diocese.

LaRocque, interviewed at his Montreal Road home Sunday during his 19th annual New Year's levee, would not comment on any aspect of the case.

Meanwhile, an Ottawa Valley man claims Cornwall police vio-

lated his privacy and victimized him a second time by making public his witness statement about being sexually abused.

The man told an Ottawa newspaper he has retained a lawyer and is considering suing the police force for violating municipal freedom of information laws.

But Staff Sgt. Brendon Wells of Cornwall Police Services said he is satisfied no member of the local force gave any statement to the news media.

Wells, however, admitted he has no idea how the witness statement became public. He said police are investigating the matter.

Bishop emphasizes 'family'

By SULTAN JESSA
Staff Writer

Bishop Eugene LaRocque says he wants to place more emphasis on the importance of family life this year.

"We have to look at how we can support and encourage young and old families to stay together," LaRocque said in an interview with the *Standard-Freeholder* Sunday.

Many people today don't even know what family life is, LaRocque said.

He added it is the children who suffer most when relationships break up.

"Children today need greater security and a love of parents," he said.

The bishop said he visited classrooms in the Catholic School system prior to his recent visit to the Vatican for an audience with Pope John Paul II.

"I saw tension and suffering on the faces of children when I visited the classrooms," he said. "This is not normal. This is an adult type of suffering."

LaRocque said it is sad to see many homes, even some good homes, breaking up these days.

Many children are scared be-

cause their friends have been victims of broken homes, he said.

"Many teenagers blame themselves when relationships break up. We have to reassure them and give them hope."

LaRocque made the comments in an interview during his annual New Year's levee. More than 300 visited him at his Montreal Road residence.

The levee is usually held on the first Sunday after the New Year. It was delayed for a week this year because the first Sunday was too close to the festive season.

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