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Pope declines resignation of Dublin auxiliary bishops

by Michael Kelly by Catholic News Service

DUBLIN -- Pope Benedict XVI has decided not to accept the resignation of two Dublin auxiliary bishops who resigned in the wake of the Murphy Report investigation into clerical child abuse in the archdiocese.

Auxiliary Bishops Raymond Field and Eamonn Walsh resigned Dec. 24 after coming under intense pressure because they served as bishops during the period investigated by the Murphy Commission.

In a letter to priests of the Dublin archdiocese Aug. 11, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin confirmed the development.

"Following the presentation of their resignations to Pope Benedict, it has been decided that Bishop Eamonn Walsh and Bishop Raymond Field will remain as auxiliary bishops," he said.

Archbishop Martin said the two men are "to be assigned revised responsibilities within the diocese."

Both bishops initially resisted calls for their resignation. However, both sent resignation letters to Rome after Archbishop Martin apparently failed to give them his total support.

When asked in December 2009 whether he had confidence in his auxiliaries, Martin said he had confidence "in their ministry," but did not go further. Within 24 hours, both auxiliaries announced they had sent their letters of resignation to Rome. Bishops Field and Walsh were among four Irish bishops who offered their resignation after a judicial report found that there had been a culture of cover-up of child sexual abuse in Dublin over several decades.

Earlier, Benedict accepted the resignations of Bishops Donal Murray of Limerick and James Moriarty of Kildare and Leighlin. Bishop Murray's failure to properly investigate an allegation of sexual abuse was described in the judicial report as inexcusable. Bishop Moriarty said he resigned because he had failed to

challenge the prevailing culture within the church.

Andrew Madden, who was abused as an altar boy in Dublin, said he was "disappointed" by the pope's decision not to accept the auxiliary bishops' resignations. However, he said, "I am not surprised; I have long since given up hope of the Catholic Church getting its act together when it comes to child protection.

"The Catholic Church, right from the Vatican down, has refused to fully acknowledge this problem," Madden said.

Reacting to Archbishop Martin's announcement, Barbara Blaine, president and founder of the U.S. based Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests, issued a statement saying, "By rejecting the resignations of two complicit Irish bishops, the pope is rubbing more salt into the already deep and still fresh wounds of thousands of child sex abuse victims and millions of betrayed Catholics.

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"He's sending an alarming message to church employees across the globe: Even widespread documentation of the concealing of child sex crimes and the coddling of criminals won't cost you your job in the church," the statement said.

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