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Bishop, drained from sex abuse, retires early

Francis X. Rocca Religion News Service | Apr. 5, 2011

VATICAN CITY -- Pope Benedict XVI has accepted the early resignation of an ?emotionally drained? bishop in Australia whose diocese has been the focus of several prominent sex-abuse scandals.

The Vatican announced on Monday that Bishop Michael John Malone, 71, of Maitland-Newcastle has resigned under a provision that requires the resignation of a ?bishop who has become less able to fulfill his office because of ill health or some other grave cause.?

The ordinary retirement age for Catholic bishops is 75.

The local Newcastle Herald newspaper reported in January that Malone, who had led the diocese since 1995, said he was seeking early retirement because he was exhausted by dealing with cases of clerical sex abuse.

?I?m emotionally drained by what has happened and feel disillusioned,? Malone told the paper. ?I toss and turn at night over the sex abuse committed by clergy and experience a lot of anxiety.?

The bishop suggested his handling of the scandal, which included the publication of a full-page apology in the *Herald* last year, had alienated some of his own clergy.

?The priests believe I have not been supportive of them,? Malone said.

The paper also reported Malone was under investigation by local police for the ?attempted secret defrocking? of an abusive priest.

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