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Scottish cardinal resigns amid allegations of 'inappropriate acts'

Dennis Coday | Feb. 25, 2013 NCR Today
Conclave 2013

Scottish Cardinal Keith O?Brien, Britain?s most senior Roman Catholic cleric, has resigned as Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh and he says he won't attend the conclave to elect the next pope.

O'Brien had been accused by three priests and a former priest of inappropriate behavior, the newspaper The Observer reported Sunday.

He said in a statement that he will not travel to the conclave as he does not want media attention focused on him.

The Vatican spokesman said today at a media briefing that O'Brien's resignation had been submitted Feb. 18 and offered because O'Brien in March will turn 75, the mandatory retirement age for bishops.

In a **statement issued this morning** [1]in Edinburgh, O'Brien said, ""I was happy to know that he accepted my resignation ?nunc pro tunc? ? (now ? but to take effect later) on 13 November 2012. The Holy Father has now decided that my resignation will take effect today, 25 February 2013. ...

"Looking back over my years of ministry: For any good I have been able to do, I thank God. For any failures, I apologise to all whom I have offended. ...

"I also ask God?s blessing on my brother Cardinals who will soon gather in Rome to elect his successor. I will not join them for this Conclave in person. I do not wish media attention in Rome to be focussed on me ? but rather on Pope Benedict XVI and on his Successor."

According to reports from the United Kingdom this weekend, three priests and a former priest in Scotland reported they had been subjected to inappropriate behavior from O?Brien dating back 30 years to when the cardinal was a spiritual director and rector of St Andrew's College.

The four complained to the Vatican's ambassador to Britain and demanded O'Brien's immediate resignation. A spokesman for the cardinal said on the weekend that he would contest the allegations.

O'Brien missed celebrating Sunday Mass in St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh

The former priest alleged that when he was a seminarian in 1980, O'Brien made an inappropriate approach to him after night prayers. The man was ordained, but resigned after O?Brien was named a bishop. "I knew then he would always have power over me. It was assumed I left the priesthood to get married. I did not. I left to preserve my integrity," he said in a statement. Another complainant said the cardinal used the guise of night prayers for inappropriate contact.

A third complainant said inappropriate contact took place between him and O?Brien while he was seeing O?Brien for spiritual direction. A fourth complainant alleges O?Brien made an inappropriate approach to him after late-night drinking

For background on this story see: **UK's top cardinal accused of 'inappropriate acts' by priests** [2]

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[1] http://news.stv.tv/scotland/215327-cardinal-keith-obrien-resignation-statement-in-full/
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