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Embattled Scottish cardinal resigns, won't partake in conclave

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Cardinal Keith Patrick O'Brien, the archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh in Scotland who has been accused of inappropriate sexual relations with priests, has resigned as archbishop and has indicated he will not partake in the election of the next pope.

News of O'Brien's resignation came Monday in a press release from his diocese, which said the cardinal, who turns 75 in March, had submitted his resignation to the pope in November.

"Given the imminent Vacant See, the Holy Father has now decided to accept the said resignation definitively," stated the release [1] from the Scottish archdiocese.

Said O'Brien in the release: "The Holy Father has now decided that my resignation will take effect today, 25 February 2013, and that he will appoint an Apostolic Administrator to govern the Archdiocese in my place until my successor as Archbishop is appointed. In the meantime I will give every assistance to the Apostolic Administrator and to our new Archbishop, once he is appointed, as I prepare to move into retirement."

"I will not join them for this Conclave in person," O'Brien continued. "I do not wish media attention in Rome to be focused on me -- but rather on Pope Benedict XVI and on his Successor."

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesperson, confirmed the news at a press conference Monday, adding that he would not comment on the cardinal's decision to not partake in the conclave.

Basilian Fr. Thomas Rosica, who provided English translation at the Vatican press conference, said Pope Benedict had meant to approve O'Brien's resignation earlier, but "because of the date of the pope's resignation, some things were held up a bit."

"Our role here is simply to confirm the resignation," Rosica said. "We do not comment on other stories, or things you may have heard."

Three priests and one former priest had reported O'Brien to the apostolic nuncio to Great Britain in early February, claiming [2] the cardinal had acted in inappropriate sexual ways toward them in incidents over the last three decades.

O'Brien has denied the allegations through his spokesperson. He had been the third cardinal expected to participate in the upcoming papal election to face inquiries over issues of sex abuse after retired Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony and New York Cardinal Timothy Dolan.

Mahony has been prohibited by his successor, Archbishop Jose Gomez, from participating in public ministry in his diocese because of his handling of sex abuse cases in the 1980s.

Dolan, who is also the president of the U.S. bishops' conference, was deposed last week [3] in his handling of sex abuse cases while he was archbishop of Milwaukee from 2002 to 2009.

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