

Retired Nova Scotia bishop turns himself in to face child porn charges

OTTAWA - Retired Bishop Raymond J. Lahey of Antigonish, Nova Scotia, turned himself in to Ottawa police Oct. 1 to face charges of possession of and importing child pornography.

He appeared in court later that day and was released on CA\$9,000 (\$8,317) bail with strict conditions that include staying away from the Internet. His next court date for a plea of guilty or not guilty is Nov. 4. In the meantime, he must stay in Rogersville, New Brunswick.

Bishop Lahey, 69, who abruptly resigned as bishop for “personal reasons” Sept. 26, was detained Sept. 15 at the Ottawa airport by the Canada Border Services Agency, after officers conducted a preliminary search of his computer and discovered “images of concern.”

Border agents seized the bishop’s computer and other “media devices” for forensic investigation, then released the bishop.

On Sept. 25, Ottawa police formalized the charges and issued an arrest warrant.

Pope Benedict XVI accepted Bishop Lahey’s resignation Sept. 26 and appointed Halifax Archbishop Anthony Mancini as Antigonish’s apostolic administrator.

In August, Bishop Lahey had announced a more than \$13 million settlement agreement for a class action lawsuit for clergy sexual abuse dating back to the

1950s. He had been widely praised for his pastoral concern and pursuit of justice in the agreement.

The pornography charges became public Sept. 30.

In a statement issued that day, Archbishop Mancini said that “for the priests and people of the Antigonish Diocese, this is a terrible moment.”

The archbishop told the Halifax Chronicle Herald newspaper Sept. 30 that he had spoken to Bishop Lahey on his cell phone for a few minutes earlier that day, after learning about the charges.

“He certainly indicated to me that he was not feeling very good at this point,” the archbishop told the newspaper. He said he did not know where the bishop was, although he thought he was still in Canada.

In a television interview with CTV News Sept. 30, Archbishop Mancini said Pope Benedict must have known the grave reasons behind Bishop Lahey’s resignation, but that he and the others in the Antigonish Diocese were unaware of them.

Bishop Lahey became bishop of Antigonish in 2003 after 17 years as a bishop in Newfoundland.