

U.S. archbishop is part of Legionaries' visitation that starts July 15

ROME - A Vatican-ordered apostolic visitation of the Legionaries of Christ and their institutions will begin July 15, and the papal delegates carrying out the investigations will include U.S. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput of Denver.

In a written statement sent to Catholic News Service July 8, the Legionaries' headquarters in Rome said the Vatican had set the date for the start of the visitation and named the five prelates appointed by the Vatican to carry out the visits.

It said Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone told the order that Archbishop Chaput will conduct investigations of the Legionaries' centers and institutions in the United States and Canada while Mexican Bishop Ricardo Watty Urquidi of Tepic will cover Mexico and Central America.

It said Bishop Giuseppe Versaldi of Alessandria, Italy, will cover Italy, Israel, South Korea and the Philippines; Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati Andrello of Concepcion, Chile, will visit centers and institutions in South America; and Bishop Ricardo Blazquez Perez of Bilbao, Spain, will cover all of Europe, excluding Italy.

Each delegate will conduct his investigation "according to the timetable and program that he establishes," said the statement.

At the end of the investigation, the delegates will submit reports to the Vatican which will then establish appropriate guidelines or directives for the order, it said.

Father Alvaro Corcuera, director general of the Legionaries and its lay association, Regnum Christi, invited all members of the congregation "to thank God for the help that the Holy Father is offering us and to welcome the visitors with sincere charity and faith as representatives of the vicar of Christ," said the statement.

The Legionaries announced in March that the Vatican had ordered the special

visitation following disclosures of sexual impropriety by the order's late founder, Father Marcial Maciel Degollado.

In the letter that informed the Legionaries of the pope's decision for an investigation, Cardinal Bertone said the pope wanted to help the Legionaries of Christ deal with its present problems with "truth and transparency."

An apostolic visitation is a form of internal church investigation ordered by a pope and undertaken by his delegate or delegates. The pope sets the jurisdiction and powers of the visitation, which usually ends with the submission of a report to the Holy See.

In February, Legionaries of Christ officials in Rome disclosed that Father Maciel had fathered a child. Sources in Rome said the order was also looking into accusations of financial irregularities by Father Maciel.

In the past, Father Maciel had been accused of sexually abusing young seminarians in the order. After investigating those allegations, the Vatican in 2006 told Father Maciel to renounce public ministry as a priest and spend the rest of his life in prayer and penitence; the Vatican did not, however, confirm that sexual abuse had occurred.

Father Maciel died Jan. 30, 2008, at the age of 87.

Woodmont Academy in Cooksville is affiliated with the Legionaries.