

Vatican tribunal finds Archbishop Apuron of Guam guilty of abuse

VATICAN CITY — A Vatican tribunal found Archbishop Anthony S. Apuron of Agana, Guam, guilty of some of the accusations made against him, accusations which included the sexual abuse of minors.

After a canonical trial conducted by the apostolic tribunal of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Vatican judges imposed the following sanctions on the 72-year-old archbishop: the removal from office and a prohibition from residing in Guam. The archbishop can appeal the sentence.

Archbishop Apuron is among the highest-ranking church leaders to have been tried by the Vatican for sexual offenses.

In a press statement released March 16, the tribunal said, "The canonical trial in the matter of accusations, including accusations of sexual abuse of minors, brought against the Most Reverend Anthony Sablan Apuron, O.F.M.Cap., Archbishop of Agana, Guam, has been concluded."

"The apostolic tribunal of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, composed of five judges, has issued its sentence of first instance, finding the accused guilty of certain of the accusations and imposing upon the accused the penalties of privation of office and prohibition of residence in the Archdiocese of Guam." U.S. Cardinal Raymond L. Burke, a noted canon lawyer, was the presiding judge in the canonical investigation of Archbishop Apuron.

"The sentence remains subject to possible appeal," the Vatican statement said. "In the absence of an appeal, the sentence becomes final and effective. In the case of an appeal, the imposed penalties are suspended until final resolution."

Archbishop Apuron had been accused of sexually abusing several boys in the 1970s, and, in early January, one of the archbishop's nephews publicly claimed the archbishop had sexually abused him in 1990. Archbishop Apuron continually has denied the abuse allegations.

Pope Francis placed Archbishop Apuron on leave in June 2016 after the accusations were made public. The pope named an apostolic administrator to run the archdiocese for several months and then named Coadjutor Archbishop Michael J. Byrnes, a former auxiliary bishop of Detroit, to take over.

Until the Vatican court handed down its sentence, Archbishop Apuron had continued to hold the title of archbishop of Agana, but did not hold the faculties, rights or obligations pertaining to the office, because they had been granted to Archbishop Byrnes.

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