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Vatican decision undisclosed

Mindy Aguon | The Guam Daily Post Oct 3, 2017



APURON: The image on the left is believed to be a photo of suspended Archbishop Anthony Apuron in Fairfield, California, taken in January 2016 by a private investigator working for some of the plaintiffs in the child sex abuse cases against Apuron. The photo on the right shows Apuron when he was still leading the Archdiocese of Agana. Post files

A Vatican tribunal has issued a decision on suspended Archbishop Anthony Apron's trial but the specifics have yet to be disclosed until all the judges sign off on the sentence.

Coadjutor Archbishop Michael Byrnes confirmed yesterday that a sentence, a canonical term for a formal written decision in a particular case, has been rendered by the tribunal but the release of the details is pending signatures of other judges who were involved.

Byrnes said he was advised by Father Justin Wachs, the canonical notary in Apuron's tribunal, that a decision had been reached but the actual outcome was not disclosed. No time frame had been given on when the information would be released by the Vatican, but Byrnes said he, like many other people, is anxious to know the outcome.

Archdiocese of Agana Director of Communications Tony Diaz said it was explained to the archbishop that the sentence will encompass three things: the specific charges against Apuron and that would include any violations of canon law; the final decision itself of "guilty," "not guilty" or "has not been proven"; and the third would be what penalty will be imposed, in the event of guilt.

Byrnes would be the first to be informed, followed by Apuron.

Diaz confirmed the archdiocese would hold a press conference and publicly release those parts of the sentence that the Vatican allows him to share.

Apuron's civil lawyer, Jacqueline Taitano-Terlaje, said she and her client have not been notified about a sentence from the tribunal. When asked if there is an appeal process that follows, Taitano-Terlaje confirmed she was told there is a process but details of how that works are unclear at this time.

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In July of last year, Walter Denton, Roy Quintanilla, Roland Sondia and Doris Concepcion – on behalf of her late son, Joseph "Sonny" Quinata – came forward accusing Apuron of molesting them when they were altar boys at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Agat in the 1970s.

Documents obtained by The Guam Daily Post earlier this year showed a protocol number attached to a decree sent to Apuron's accusers that may indicate the case involving Apuron was opened as early as 2008, although it's unclear if the sex-abuse allegations were filed with the Vatican that early.

The canonical trial however began in August of last year when a complaint was filed by the Promoter of Justice at the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith.

Attorney Patrick Wall, a former priest and an advocate at Jeff Anderson & Associates, has said he believes Apuron could be the first bishop he is aware of, accused of sexually assaulting children, who finished a canonical trial. Wall's research showed that Archbishop Jozef Weslowski, Apostolic Nuncio to Haiti, died prior to the completion of his 2015 trial in Rome.

Byrnes, in previous press conferences, has said he believed it would be "disastrous" if Apuron came back to retain leadership of the Archdiocese of Agana.