

# Priest in abuse case will get 2nd review

## Cardinal declines permanent ouster for church pastor

By **Julia Lieblich**  
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Tribune staff reporters

Cardinal Francis George declined Tuesday to remove Rev. Raymond **Skriba** permanently from ministry even though the archdiocesan review board has concluded that there is "reasonable cause" to suspect that child sex abuse occurred in his case.

For the first time in the current abuse crisis, George called for "a second-stage" examination of the allegations, citing differing accounts and **Skriba's** denials. He accepted

**Skriba's** written request to withdraw indefinitely as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Round Lake while the investigation continues.

**Skriba**, accused of molesting two girls nearly 40 years ago, said last weekend that if his withdrawal was approved, he would devote his time to proving his innocence.

On Tuesday the first woman to submit allegations about **Skriba** called the cardinal's decision "a travesty" that violated the U.S. bishops' zero-tolerance policy.

"I want to know why Cardinal George is breaking all the rules for Raymond **Skriba**," said the woman, who is in her 50s and living in another state.

In a written statement, the cardinal said his decision is in

PLEASE SEE **PRIEST**, PAGE 6

**PRIEST:**  
Cardinal is

"We shouldn't be calling these 'allegations' anymore," she said. "We have disclosures from two victims who are extremely credible. They provided information for corroboration, both

# accused of violating rule

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

full accord "with both the specifics and the spirit" of the U.S. bishops' new Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

Later, at a ceremony for a low-cost housing development, George defended his action.

Skriba "has voluntarily removed himself," George said. "If the allegation is true, he is permanently removed. The result is he's gone. He's out of there, which allows the process to go forward."

Review board procedures allow for first-stage reviews within three to five days after receipt of an allegation and more comprehensive second-stage reviews initiated 30 to 120 days after the initial examination.

In previous cases, priests suspected of misconduct were removed permanently after the first-stage review was completed, said James Dwyer, a spokesman for the archdiocese. No second-stage review was conducted. Skriba's first-stage review also took an unusually long time to complete.

"In those cases we had more than sufficient evidence to indicate that they should be removed," Dwyer said. "Here we're dealing with allegations that are decades old. . . . We have competing stories of what happened."

But Barbara Blaine, president of the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests, said the evidence is more than sufficient to remove Skriba.

people and documents. The big question is: Why is he being treated differently from anyone else?"

Skriba, 70, is accused of molesting the two girls when he was an associate pastor of St. Gertrude Church in Franklin Park about 40 years ago. The first allegation surfaced in mid-April and was followed by the second person's allegation.

David Clohessy of SNAP said the archdiocese's actions have run counter to the intent of the bishops' new rules.

Under the bishops' policy, adopted in June in Dallas, any priest found to have committed even a single act of child sex abuse during his career is to be removed from ministry and in some cases the priesthood. The policy calls on dioceses to "respond promptly" to allegations of abuse.

In Skriba's case, archdiocesan officials defended the timing on the grounds of insufficient evidence. Skriba was placed under monitoring in his parish after the first woman made complaints against him, the archdiocese said.

A lawyer for the first woman said he faxed her complaint to archdiocese officials April 16. The woman's complaint provided her name and the dates and locations of the alleged abuse, saying she was repeatedly molested from age 14 through 19.

"What this man did to me quite literally ruined my life, but until recently, I never said a word about it, in spite of the fact that I was in therapy for many years and even spent a short time in a psychiatric hospital," the woman wrote in her April complaint.

*Tribune staff reporter Donna Freedman contributed to this re-*