

Pope accepts resignation of nuncio to France accused of misconduct

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of Archbishop Luigi Ventura, the nuncio to France, who has been under investigation for sexual misconduct in France and in Canada.

Announcing the archbishop's retirement Dec. 17, the Vatican provided no reason why he stepped down.

A statement released by the nunciature in Paris said Pope Francis accepted the resignation "for reasons of age." Archbishop Ventura turned 75, the age at which bishops must offer their resignations, Dec. 9.

A French judicial official confirmed in February that the prosecutor's office in Paris had opened an investigation into an allegation of "sexual aggression" by Archbishop Ventura.

The French newspaper, Le Monde, reported that the archbishop was suspected of having sexually molested a young male employee at the Paris city hall Jan. 17, the day the mayor was giving her New Year's address to diplomats and other leading figures.

A few weeks after the French court report the apostolic nunciature in Ottawa, Ontario, confirmed it received a complaint of sexual misconduct concerning Archbishop Ventura, who was the Vatican's ambassador to Canada from 2001 to 2009.

In its story on the archbishop's retirement, Vatican News reported Dec. 17 that in France four accusations, "three for presumed sexual molestation," have been filed against him.

A preliminary investigation in France concluded in late June

and the Vatican in July announced that it had waived the archbishop's diplomatic immunity.

The move to waive diplomatic immunity was "an extraordinary gesture that confirms the will of the nuncio, expressed from the beginning of the matter, to cooperate fully and spontaneously with the French judicial authorities responsible for the case," the Vatican press office said at the time.

Although the archbishop did not officially step down as nuncio until after he turned 75, French media, including the Catholic outlets I.Media and La Croix, reported in September that the archbishop already had moved back to Rome and was living in a Vatican-owned apartment building.