

# Pope begins restoring normal governance to Chilean dioceses

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Beginning the process of restoring normal governance to the dioceses of Chile in the wake of a massive clerical sexual abuse and cover-up scandal, Pope Francis named archbishops for the archdioceses of Santiago and Puerto Montt.

In May 2018 every bishop in Chile offered his resignation to Pope Francis after a three-day meeting at the Vatican to discuss the abuse scandal and cover up.

By March 2019, Pope Francis had accepted the resignations of eight of the bishops leading one of the country's 27 dioceses or other church jurisdictions.

Embattled Cardinal Ricardo Ezzati of Santiago was the last to step down. Pope Francis named Bishop Celestino Aros Braco of Copiapo, 74, as administrator of the archdiocese in March and named him archbishop Dec. 27.

Also Dec. 27, Pope Francis named former Santiago Auxiliary Bishop Luis Fernando Ramos Perez of Santiago to be the archbishop of Puerto Montt. The new archbishop, who turns 61 Jan. 2, had been apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Rancagua since June 2018.

In October, Pope Francis named Spanish Archbishop Alberto Ortega Martin as the new apostolic nuncio to Chile.

With the Diocese of Copiapo now vacant, the December appointments leave eight Chilean dioceses headed by apostolic administrators.

In July, the news agency Reuters reported that Chilean government officials said they were investigating more than

150 cases of sexual abuse or cover-up in the church. Among those being investigated for possible cover-up are senior members of the clergy, including the past two archbishops of Santiago: Cardinals Ezzati and Francisco Javier Errazuriz Ossa.