

Police charge Vatican cardinal with sex offenses

SYDNEY (AP) — Australian police charged a top Vatican cardinal on Thursday with multiple counts of historical sexual assault offenses, a stunning decision certain to rock the highest levels of the Holy See.

Cardinal George Pell, Pope Francis' chief financial adviser and Australia's most senior Catholic, is the highest-ranking Vatican official to ever be charged in the church's long-running sexual abuse scandal. Pell said he would return to Australia to fight the charges.

Victoria state Police Deputy Commissioner Shane Patton said police have summoned Pell to appear in an Australian court to face multiple charges of "historical sexual assault offenses," meaning offenses that generally occurred some time ago. Patton said there are multiple complainants against Pell, but gave no other details on the allegations against the cardinal. Pell was ordered to appear in Melbourne Magistrates Court on July 18.

For years, Pell has faced allegations that he mishandled cases of clergy abuse when he was archbishop of Melbourne and, later, Sydney. But more recently, Pell himself became the focus of a clergy sex abuse investigation, with Victoria detectives flying to the Vatican last year to interview the cardinal. It is unclear what allegations the charges announced Thursday relate to, but two men, now in

their 40s, have said that Pell touched them inappropriately at a swimming pool in the late 1970s, when Pell was a senior priest in Melbourne.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney issued a statement on behalf of Pell, saying the 76-year-old cardinal "strenuously denied all allegations" and would return to Australia to clear his name.

"He said he is looking forward to his day in court and will defend the charges vigorously," the statement said.

Patton told reporters in Melbourne that none of the allegations against Pell had been tested in any court, adding: "Cardinal Pell, like any other defendant, has a right to due process."

The charges are a new and serious blow to Pope Francis, who has already suffered several credibility setbacks in his promised "zero tolerance" policy about sex abuse.

Pell's actions as archbishop came under intense scrutiny in recent years by a government-authorized investigation into how the Catholic Church and other institutions have responded to the sexual abuse of children. Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse — the nation's highest form of inquiry — has found shocking levels of abuse in Australia's Catholic Church, revealing earlier this year that 7 percent of Catholic priests were accused of sexually abusing children over the past several decades.

FIREWORKS: Marks hopes someone will pick up the fundraising effort in 2018

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"It's just a huge project, and it takes a group to do it," she said.

Marks said a community fireworks show was the longtime responsibility of the local Junior Chamber of Commerce. When the Jaycees disbanded, fundraising responsibility began hopping between various community organizations.

The Eagles took over for Cornerstone Church three years ago, but Marks felt that she bore most of the responsibility for the 2016 show.

"Last year, I got no help whatsoever," she said.

Marks said she told people inside and outside the Eagles that she wasn't going to lead fundraising this year, but no one revived the effort.

People underestimate the money and effort it takes to organize the event each year, Marks said, and it takes the

"Last year, I got no help whatsoever."

— **Becky Marks**, organizer of past shows as a member of the Eagles

work of an organization to make it happen.

Marks, who is serving her third term on the Pendleton City Council, said the city already contributes to the show by providing public safety and she would not support taking \$10,000 from the city's general fund to put the show on.

Marks said she hopes that the lack of fireworks this year will inspire someone else to pick up the fundraising effort in 2018. The Fourth of July parade in downtown Pendleton will go on as scheduled, beginning at 10 a.m.

IRRIGON: Morrow County's fire departments are manned with volunteer firefighters

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"I saw a little bit of smoke. I didn't think anything of it, then all the sudden boom, I see a huge thing of black smoke," he said.

He ran to help get people out of the nearest home, then grabbed a garden hose and started spraying everything down. He said the fire department took "a long while" to show up so he was grateful for everyone who jumped in and helped as soon as they realized the field was on fire.

"All these good people from the community came together and saved these houses," he said.

The news release from the sheriff's office reminded citizens that all of Morrow County's fire departments are manned with volunteer firefighters who are not waiting at the fire hall to respond to calls, but must instead leave their day jobs to go to the fire hall and suit up before heading out to fight the fire. Homeowners can "greatly improve the chances" of saving their homes by keeping the 30 feet around their homes cleared of flammable brush and dry grasses, which are especially thick this year due to the

extra wet winter and spring.

"Thanks to the expertise and hard work of our local and neighboring fire fighters there was no loss of life or homes due to this fast moving fire," the release said.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.

SHOOTING: Obstruction charge carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison

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hostage rescue team at the scene failed to disclose that they fired two rounds that missed the Arizona rancher.

"The actions of the FBI HRT team in this case damage the integrity of the entire law enforcement profession, which makes me both disappointed and angry," said Deschutes County Sheriff Shane Nelson, whose department investigated Fincum's shooting.

Oregon U.S. Attorney Billy Williams would neither confirm nor deny that up to four additional members of the FBI team are under investigation for making false statements.

Asked why Astarita may have lied, Williams said: "I suspect that question will be answered in court."

The FBI spokeswoman in Portland, Jennifer Adams, referred questions to headquarters in Washington, D.C., which did not return messages seeking comment.

A grand jury indicted Astarita on making false statements to his FBI supervisors just after the shooting and obstruction of justice for misleading the Oregon State Police.

A one-week jury trial is set for Aug. 29. The obstruction charge carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, while making a false statement could bring five years.

Fincum's widow, Jeanette Fincum, has said she plans to sue state police and the FBI, alleging the use of excessive force in her husband's death. Nobody answered a call to her number Wednesday, and her lawyer, Brian Claypool,



U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon Billy J. Williams speaks during a press conference in Portland Wednesday, after the indictment of an FBI agent. FBI special agent W. Joseph Astarita pleaded not guilty to charges that he lied about shooting at a key figure in last year's armed occupation of a national wildlife refuge just before the man was killed by Oregon police.

did not return a message seeking comment.

Dozens of people, including leader Ammon Bundy, occupied the remote Malheur National Wildlife Refuge from Jan. 2 to Feb. 11, 2016. They were allowed to come and go for several weeks as authorities tried to avoid bloodshed seen in past standoffs at Waco, Texas, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho.

But authorities moved in Jan. 26 when key standoff leaders left for a community meeting, pulling over two vehicles and arresting the occupiers inside.

Fincum, 54, was driving one vehicle. Video taken by a passenger showed the occupants panicking after

authorities stopped the truck.

With his window rolled down, Fincum shouted at officers: "Shoot me, just shoot me! Put the bullet through me."

Fincum then sped off, coming to a roadblock and plowing into a snowbank.

Authorities say the FBI agent fired two errant shots as Fincum left the truck. As Fincum stood in the snow, authorities told him to lie on the ground. Instead, he reached toward his jacket, and state troopers fired three rounds that hit him.

Williams, the U.S. attorney, said the shooting was necessary to protect officer safety.

Most occupiers left

the refuge after Fincum's death, though four holdouts stayed an additional 16 days.

Federal prosecutors tried to convict occupation leaders Ammon and Ryan Bundy and five others in a trial last fall but jurors acquitted them of charges of conspiring to impede federal workers from their jobs.

Several others pleaded guilty without going to trial or were convicted.

The Bundys and others are now facing conspiracy charges in Nevada over a 2014 armed standoff with federal agents.

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SAFEWAY: Fitzmorris nowhere near ready to retire

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national and state parks in Northern California.

Safeway floral manager Tari Smith echoed some of Fitzmorris' thoughts.

Smith, herself a 33-year veteran of Safeway, said Fitzmorris always brings a positive attitude to the job that she appreciated. Smith said Safeway has several decades-long employees at the Pendleton store and attributed it to the company's benefit package and overall stability.

Some of Smith's and Fitzmorris' opinions are mirrored in recent research.

According to a 2015 study by the Oregon Employment Department, the grocery retail sector has remained relatively stable despite a fluctuating economy.

Between 2001 and 2015, grocery employers' total payroll employment increased by 7.2 percent, a point lower than the state's total average but a point higher than the retail trade industry overall.

And while the grocery industry resisted the housing bubble in 2005 by only growing by 0.6 percent, it performed admirably during the 2009 recession year, shrinking by 2.5 percent while retail trade decreasing by 6.8 percent and total employment by 6.2 percent.



Safeway cashier Mike Fitzmorris spent the first 35-years of his career working in the Beaverton area before moving to work in the Pendleton store 10 years ago.

Age demographics are also starting to reflect grocery stores' experienced workforce.

While 1 in 8 grocery workers were between the ages of 14-18 in 1991, that figure dwindled to 1 in 28 by 2014, although the industry still has the highest share of 14-24 year old workers of any job sector in Oregon.

On the other end of the spectrum, the share of workers ages 45-54 has grown from 11 percent in 1991 to 19 percent in 2015. The 55-64 cohort grew at a similar rate.

Despite his own stability, Fitzmorris has noticed some other changes. When he started at Safeway, Fitzmorris remembers grocery store work being viewed as a middle-class type of job. Now, Fitzmorris sees higher turnover and many see the job as a stepping stone to a more lucrative career elsewhere.

Fitzmorris' boss, Michael Cox, said he rose to front end manager after starting out his Safeway career a few years ago by collecting carts in the parking lot. Cox added how

odd it was to mentor an employee who dwarfed him in experience.

Fitzmorris said he and his wife are trying to steer their daughter away from a career in the grocery industry and into more professional career path. But Fitzmorris sees himself adding plenty more time to the 45 years he's worked at a local Safeway — he's nowhere near ready to retire.

Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

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