

# Scottish cardinal resigns after sex accusations

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Cardinal Keith O'Brien of Scotland resigned on February 25 in the wake of explosive charges that he had made "inappropriate" sexual advances to four men, three of them priests and one now a former seminarian, starting in the 1980s.

O'Brien said he would skip the upcoming conclave to elect a successor to Pope Benedict XVI, leaving the United Kingdom without a cardinal's voice in the election of a new pope.

In a statement, O'Brien said Benedict had accepted his resignation effective immediately, and he appeared to allude to the events surrounding his sudden exit.

"Looking back over my years of ministry: For any good I have been able to do, I thank God. For any failures, I apologize to all whom I have offended," said the cardinal, who turns 75 in March, which is the mandatory retirement age for bishops. Cardinals retain the right to vote in a conclave until age 80.

The resignation added to the air of crisis and tumult that has surrounded the Vatican since Benedict earlier announced his intention to resign on February 28.

In the weeks since Benedict's announcement, the media have been filled with reports of infighting and scandals that allegedly drove the pope to step down; the latest revelation was a charge that Benedict recently learned of a number of gay churchmen in the Vatican who have allegedly been subject to blackmail. —RNS

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