

Men Allowed To Pursue Damages From Vatican

THEY SAY THEY WERE ABUSED AS YOUTHS

The Associated Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Three men who accuse Catholic priests of sexually abusing them in childhood can pursue damages from the Vatican in a negligence lawsuit, a federal judge ruled Thursday.

The ruling lets the men pursue their claim that top church officials should have warned the public or authorities about priests in the Louisville Archdiocese who were suspected of abusing children.

William McMurry, the plaintiffs' attorney, said the ruling could open the way to take depositions of Vatican officials and to obtain copies of church records and documents.

"Our whole purpose is to

hold the Vatican accountable," McMurry said.

Many lawsuits stemming from the clergy sex abuse crisis have named the pope, the Vatican and other high-ranking church officials as defendants. But the Holy See is typically immune from the jurisdiction of U.S. courts.

U.S. District Judge John G. Heyburn II dismissed claims that the Holy See was negligent by failing to protect children entrusted to the clergy. He also threw out claims of deceit and misrepresentation by the Vatican.

Jeffrey Lena, a California-based attorney for the Vatican, said the ruling was in many respects favorable to the Holy See because the remaining allegations rely on the unproved assumption that U.S. bishops act as agents of the Vatican.

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