

# Archbishop accused of sex assault

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An Irish archbishop is accused of sexually assaulting a teenage girl in Africa before having a 20-year affair with her, it has emerged.

The Vatican is investigating a complaint made against Archbishop Richard Burke, who stepped down from his post with the Archdiocese of Benin in Nigeria earlier this year.

He is one of the most senior members of the Catholic Church to be accused of assaulting a minor.

Archbishop Richard Burke was a member of St Patrick's Missionary Society, based in Kiltegan, Co Wicklow.

In a statement the society, also known as the Kiltegan Fathers, confirmed it received a complaint from the woman last December.

"She alleged that she was sexually abused as a child by Richard Burke," it said. "We expressed the deep sorrow and regret of the society for the suffering the complainant and her family are going through and we affirmed the society's commitment to child protection. The society offered to provide counselling for the complainant."

Archbishop Burke, who is from Co Tipperary, was ordained a priest 34 years ago and later worked as a missionary in Nigeria. He became an archbishop in 2008.

It is alleged he sexually assaulted the victim in April 1983, when she was a 14-year-old patient in a hospital.

The victim, a married 41-year-old mother of three who now lives in Canada, maintains she also had a relationship with the cleric for more than two decades.

Archbishop Burke withdrew from ministry while the complaint is being investigated.

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