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Former nuncio dies in Vatican residence while awaiting sex-abuse trial

By Cindy Wooden [Catholic News Service](#)

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VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- Initial results of the autopsy on the body of former archbishop Jozef Wesolowski, who was awaiting trial in the Vatican on charges of child sexual abuse and possession of child pornography, indicate he died late Aug. 27 of a "cardiac incident," the Vatican said.

The results of further tests from the autopsy were pending Aug. 29, a Vatican statement said, and Vatican City State judicial authorities appointed three outside experts, including a professor of forensic medicine, to study them and issue a report.

Wesolowski, 67, the former Vatican nuncio to the Dominican Republic, was confined to Vatican property while awaiting trial. His body was found at about 5 a.m. by a priest who lived in the same building, which houses the Franciscans who hear confessions in St. Peter's Basilica, as well as offices of the Vatican police force. Wesolowski was in front of a television, which was on, said Passionist Father Ciro Benedettini, a Vatican spokesman.

Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, the papal almoner, presided at Wesolowski's funeral Mass late Aug. 31 in the chapel of the Vatican City governor's palace. The simple funeral, without flowers and without reference to his having been a priest, included prayers of consolation for his victims.

Archbishop Krajewski did not give a homily at the Mass, but instead provided close to 10 minutes of silence for personal prayer and reflection.

Soon after Wesolowski's body was discovered, Father Benedettini said, officials from the Vatican police, medical service and court arrived for an "initial verification, which indicated the death was from natural causes."

"The promoter of justice ordered an autopsy, which will be carried out today," the spokesman had said Aug. 28. "The results will be communicated as soon as possible."

In the statement, issued less than four hours after Wesolowski's body was found, Father Benedettini said Pope Francis had been informed.



CNS photo/Danny Polanco, handout via EPA

Former Archbishop Jozef Wesolowski was found dead Aug. 28 in the Vatican residence where he was awaiting trial on charges of child sexual abuse and possession of child pornography. He is pictured in a Sept. 26, 2013 file photo. (CNS photo/Danny Polanco, handout via EPA) See [WESOLOWSKI-DEATH Aug. 28, 2015](#).

The spokesman told reporters that Wesolowski had been in ill health and was under medical supervision at the time of his death.

Wesolowski was to be the first person to be tried by a Vatican criminal court on sex abuse charges. The first session of the trial had been scheduled for July 11, but was postponed when he was taken to the hospital the day before after suffering "a collapse," Father Benedettini said. He remained in the hospital until July 17.

The Vatican court had not announced a date for the continuation of the trial of the former Polish archbishop and nuncio -- Vatican ambassador -- to the Dominican Republic.

In its official statement about his death, the Vatican referred to him as "His Excellency Monsignor Jozef Wesolowski," even though he was dismissed from the clerical state in June 2014 after an investigation by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

His appeal of the dismissal was denied, Father Benedettini said, "but was not officially communicated so as not to aggravate the situation" while he was awaiting the separate criminal trial. He was still listed as an archbishop in the 2015 edition of the "Anuario Pontificio," the Vatican yearbook.

Vatican prosecutors listed five charges against Wesolowski, which included having "corrupted, by means of lewd acts, adolescents presumably between the ages of 13 and 16," in the Dominican Republic, where Wesolowski had served as a Vatican nuncio from 2008 to 2013, when he was accused of abusing adolescent boys.

According to Vatican prosecutors, Wesolowski's crimes continued once he was brought back to the Vatican. While being investigated, the court said, he procured and possessed on Vatican City State property "and elsewhere," a "large amount" of "material from Internet sites" depicting minors under the age of 18 in sexually explicit acts or poses.

He also was charged with causing "serious injury to adolescent victims of sexual abuse, consisting of mental distress" and of "conduct that offends religious principles or Christian morality" by repeatedly logging on to pornographic sites while in the Dominican Republic, Rome, Vatican City State and elsewhere.