Archdiocese sent nearly bankrupt

Catholic properties are sold to help pay compensation to child-abuse victims

By NED MCLEAN

NEW YORK

The pedophile scandal in Boston three years ago nearly sent the Catholic archdiocese bankrupt.

Boston's archbishop, Cardinal Law, was forced to resign, and, in the largest settlement by a US diocese to resolve sexual abuse claims, a great tranche of church land was sold, the archbishop's $280m pension fund was put on the market and dozens of parishes had to close.

The church was ordered to pay $101.2m ($150m) in compensation after it emerged in January 2002 that priests had abused 875 children over the previous 50 years.

There were 55 lawsuits by abuse victims, who got between $500,000 and $3m each, in a settlement that reduced the archdiocese's liability, from $600m to $2m.

The bishop's life had to sell 15 properties and much of its land.

More claims on way, church told

By STEPHEN BATES

LONDON

The Catholic Church in Britain has been warned it is likely to face further claims for compensation for the prolonged sexual abuse of children by a priest.

The warning came after The English High Court awarded a priest's victim a record $365,000 (41-49 million) damages.

The figure, awarded to a man, 35, who was abused over 10 years by Christopher Channon, is the largest settlement the church has conceded in Britain and is the first claim decided at a court hearing.

The man, known as A, was abused between the ages of seven and 18. From 1977 to 1988, while Channon was an assistant parish priest at the Church of the King of the Church in Coventry.

The court said the victim was now schizophrenic and suffered from stress disorder and had lived for the past five years in a mental health home.

Justice Clarke, hearing the case in Manchester, said: 'A told us of the abuse until 1992. He is now 35. His life has been ruined. He has never been the same again and has never regained the same enthusiasm for life that he once had.'

'The revelation of the abuse had severe consequences for his family,' (Channon) was trusted and admired. The abuse was the greatest breach of trust that A and his family faced in him.

The court heard that Channon had begun by molesting the boy and later the abuse proceeded to sexual manipulation. By the time the boy was 12 he was being sexually raped and forced to perform oral sex. Channon told the boy he would not be believed if he made accusations.

When the allegations came to light in 1992, Channon fled to Australia, where he is believed to have died in 1994. A West Midlands police investigation was stalled when documents were lost.

The award is a serious setback to the church's efforts to recover from abuse scandals that culminated in calls for Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connell, who faced calls to resign.