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## Outspoken Catholic Pastor Replaced; He Says It's Retaliation

By LAURIE GOODSTEIN

In his last Mass as pastor at the inner-city parish in Detroit where he had served for 23 years, Auxiliary Bishop Thomas J. Gumbleton told his parishioners that he was forced to step down as pastor because of his lobbying efforts on behalf of the victims of sexual abuse by members of the clergy, a stance that put him in opposition to his fellow bishops.

Last weekend, the archbishop of Detroit, Cardinal Adam Maida, sent a letter to the parish, St. Leo, saying Bishop Gumbleton had to be removed because of church rules on retirement. But as Bishop Gumbleton, who turns 77 on Friday and had already retired last year as a bishop, told his parish last Sunday, there are many pastors even older than he who are allowed to continue serving.

"I'm sure it's because of the openness with which I spoke out last January concerning victims of sex abuse in the church. So we're all suffering the consequences of that, and yet, I don't regret doing what I did because I still think it was the right thing to do," he said, as the congregation rose and erupted in applause.

Bishop Gumbleton, though he never led a diocese, is known nationally in church circles as a liberal maverick. He co-founded the peace ministry Pax Christi and accompanied antiwar delegations to Haiti and Iraq. He broke ranks with church teaching by preaching in favor of acceptance of gay men and lesbians and the ordination of women.

Last January, he lobbied in favor of a bill in Ohio to extend the statute of limitations and allow victims of sexual abuse to sue the church many years after they were abused. He said he was speaking out because he had been abused by a priest as a teenage seminarian and knew how hard it was to speak publicly even decades later. Bishops in Ohio opposed the bill, which failed.

A spokesman for the archdiocese of Detroit, Ned McGrath, said Bishop Gumbleton's removal from St. Leo Parish had nothing to do with his lobbying on sexual abuse or his political stands.

All bishops are required at age 75 to submit resignation letters to the pope, Mr. McGrath said, and the pope has the option to accept or reject the resignation. Bishop Gumbleton's resignation was accepted last year, and, Mr. McGrath said, "it was with the understanding that he would give up any pastoral office."

Cardinal Maida announced in his letter to parishioners that he had appointed a new pastor, the Rev. Gerard Battersby.

In his brief remarks at Mass on Sunday, Bishop Gumbleton told the parish that after he turned 75, he had sent a separate resignation letter to Cardinal Maida asking to stay on as pastor at St. Leo's on a year-by-year basis. He said he was surprised by his sudden replacement.

"I did not choose to leave St. Leo's," he said. "It's something that was forced upon me."

Three canon lawyers interviewed on Thursday said there was nothing in canon law that would prohibit an archbishop from permitting a retired auxiliary bishop from serving as a pastor after 75.

Bishop Gumbleton, who has already moved out of his room behind the church and plans to move into an

apartment in Detroit, did not respond to an interview request. A video of his remarks during Mass was taken by a parishioner and posted on the Web site of the National Catholic Reporter, an independent Catholic weekly newspaper that publishes a column by Bishop Gumbleton.

Mary M. Black, a parishioner at St. Leo's, said: "Almost universally, everyone in the parish is hurt and angry and upset and bewildered."

Ms. Black said: "He talks after Mass with people, and he is there ahead of Mass to say the rosary for anybody who has problems. And we all have his personal phone number. You do not have to go through a secretary. He was a pastor in the truest sense of the word."