

Former bishop Michael Bransfield barred from ministry

People in the [August 14, 2019](#) issue

Michael Bransfield, who resigned as bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, last year following a preliminary investigation into allegations of sexual and financial misconduct, has been barred by Pope Francis from public ministry. The pope has also prohibited him from living in the diocese where he served from 2005 to 2018.

Pope Francis has named Baltimore auxiliary bishop Mark Brennan to lead the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia.

The sanctions call on Bransfield to “make personal amends for some of the harm he caused.

“The nature and extent of the amends [are] to be decided in consultation with the future Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston,” the announcement said.

Bransfield resigned as bishop after an aide came forward with a report alleging years of financial scandal and sexual misconduct. The bishop was promptly placed under investigation by Archbishop William Lori of Baltimore, who has overseen the diocese in his absence.

Details of the investigation were outlined in June by the *Washington Post*. According to the report, not only did priests and seminarians accuse Bransfield of unwanted sexual advances and harassment, the bishop also gave roughly \$350,000 in cash gifts to powerful cardinals and bishops in the Vatican and the US, including Lori, as well as some of the priests he is accused of mistreating. According to the *Post*, Bransfield denied the harassment claims to investigators.

He and his staff also reportedly spent an average of nearly \$1,000 a month on alcohol, and the diocese spent \$4.6 million to renovate the cleric’s residence “after a fire damaged a single bathroom.” When Bransfield worked in one administrative building, he spent \$100 a day on the delivery of fresh flowers.

Lori reportedly received a gift of \$7,500 from Bransfield, which he said he is returning, asking that it be donated to Catholic Charities. —Religion News Service