

Catholic newspaper questions priest celibacy

BOSTON (AP) — In an extraordinary editorial on the city's child-molestation scandal, the official newspaper of the Boston Archdiocese says the Roman Catholic Church must face the question of whether to drop its requirement that priests be celibate.

The editorial, published Thursday in a special issue of *The Pilot*, asks whether there would be fewer scandals if celibacy were optional for priests and whether the priesthood attracts an unusually high number of homosexual men.

It offers no answers, but says: "These scandals have raised serious questions in the minds of the laity that simply will not

disappear."

The editorial was written by Monsignor Peter V. Conley, the paper's executive editor, who is said to be a close confidant of Cardinal Bernard Law, Boston's archbishop. Law is listed as the paper's publisher.

Philip Lawler, who was editor of *The Pilot* from 1986 to 1988 and is now editor of *Catholic World Report*, called the editorial "very unusual" for raising questions about church doctrine instead of administrative issues.

In Rome, a Vatican spokesman, the Rev. Ciro Benedettini, said: "The pope has spoken to this. He has said celibacy remains, it is a great gift to the church. He has spoken clearly in

favor of celibacy."

The archdiocese is the nation's fourth-largest, with more than 2 million Catholics, and is the center of the biggest child-molestation scandal to rock the U.S. church.

