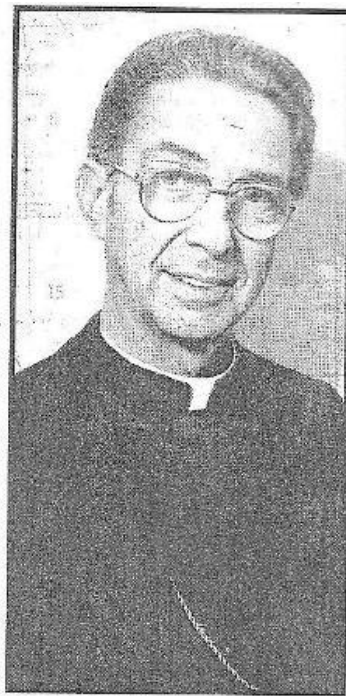


A selection from the book, *Catholic Priests Falsely Accused: The Facts, The Fraud, The Stories* (2011) by David F. Pierre Jr.

Trial by obituary

Bishop Juan Arzube died in Los Angeles on Christmas Day 2007. When he was installed as a bishop in 1971, he was one of only a few Hispanic bishops in the United States. Arzube was quite popular for the work he did with the Spanish-speaking communities in Los Angeles, and the bishop spearheaded several organizations to serve them.

When the *Los Angeles Times* finally got around to publishing his obituary nearly three weeks after his death, here is the photo that accompanied the article:



Los Angeles Times

ACCUSED

Juan Arzube denied molestation charges, but his case was included in the archdiocese's \$660-million settlement last July.

That's right. The paper stamped the word "ACCUSED" under the man's picture *in his obituary*. Although Bishop Arzube retired in 1993 and had been in frail health since 2002 (he lived in a nursing house), a single individual came forward in 2003 to accuse

Bishop Arzube of abuse back in the mid-1970's. (2003 was the year in which a California bill lifted the statute of limitations and allowed anyone to come forward with any accusation, no matter how long ago.¹)

The *Times* entitled the obituary, "L.A. bishop was lauded as an activist but tainted by accusation," and devoted nearly 30 percent of the article to the single allegation. The obituary quoted generously from the accuser's attorney and allowed him to present the case against Arzube for his anonymous client.²

Arzube vehemently denied the accusation against him, and he even demanded to meet with his accuser. (He did.) As with nearly all of the cases brought forward in 2002 and 2003, there was never a trial or hearing of any kind on this case. And because of the "blanket settlement" that the archdiocese arranged with victims' lawyers and insurance companies in July of 2007, the accuser received a sizable award from the record \$660 million agreement.

There were never any other accusations against Bishop Arzube.

This single, uncorroborated accusation was enough for the *Los Angeles Times* to soil the man's obituary.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ I chronicle this troubling California legislation in my previous book, *Double Standard*.

² Mary Rourke, "L.A. bishop was lauded as an activist but tainted by accusation," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 2008.