

## Judge allows O'Connell to travel to Vatican for 'religious experience'

By Jack Encarnacao  
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QUINCY — The Quincy developer facing statutory rape and drug charges has been given permission to travel to Italy for a "religious experience."

Norfolk County Superior Court Judge Kenneth J. Fishman granted William O'Connell's request to travel to Rome and the Vatican at the end of this month.

"The purpose of this trip is to have a religious experience by having many private guided tours of the Vatican in order to more thoroughly understand the history of the Roman Catholic Church," according to the request O'Connell filed in court.

O'Connell, 72, was indicted in August on four counts of statutory rape, each of which stems from his alleged involvement with a now 15-year-old girl over a two-year period. He was also indicted on a cocaine-trafficking charge after police allegedly found 18 grams of the drug in a safe in his Marina Bay condominium.

Phyllis Capuano, 21, of Everett was indicted as O'Connell's co-conspirator.

As a condition of his pretrial release, O'Connell must get the Probation Department's permission before he can leave Massachusetts. He was granted permission to travel to Florida and Colorado, where he has business interests.

In his most recent request, O'Connell told the court he has planned the Vatican trip for "almost two years."

He will be accompanied by his brother and development partner Peter O'Connell and longtime friends Joseph Rizzo and Brian Leonard. Rizzo owns Twinbrook Insurance; Leonard is a general manager of Granite Links Golf Course, which the O'Connell brothers developed.

The group plans to leave Feb. 29 and return March 5. It will be staying at the Hotel Columbus, which is owned by the church in the Palazzo Della Rovere, a 15th-century palace rich with religious history.

According to its website, the hotel houses a collection of centuries-old Catholic relics. One room, "the room of the demigods," features a gold-painted, wood-paneled ceiling covered with a mock-mosaic painting by Bernardino di Betto, known as Pinturicchio, made in 1490.

Special prosecutor Andrew Berman asked Fishman to order O'Connell to give probation officials all documents related to his trip, including an itinerary, and return his passport immediately after returning. Fishman ordered those conditions.

According to court documents, O'Connell's probation officer said the multimillionaire has passed all of his random drug tests and complied with all conditions related to his out-of-state business trips.

Jack Encarnacao may be reached at [jencarnacao@ledger.com](mailto:jencarnacao@ledger.com).

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