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Bishop
Diocese of Kansas City ~ St. Joseph

Statement Announcing the Settlement of 47 Abuse Cases

August 20, 2008

We apologize for the fully unacceptable behavior that prompted these lawsuits to be brought against the Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph. With compassion for the victims of this behavior and with sadness over any failure by the diocese to serve as a proper steward of safety and security for our young people and our parishioners, I am here as an individual leader of the diocese to demonstrate institutional accountability for these sad events. I pray that with the settlement of this matter, the healing for all may truly begin.

In reaching a settlement with lawyers representing the families involved in this case, we took painstaking steps to fully vet all issues enabling thoroughness to be the hallmark of this process. Assured that we have met that standard, we have agreed to fund \$10 million in payments to the victims and to adhere to a number of nonmonetary stipulations that should assure our community, our congregation and these families that the diocese will continue in its exercise of vigilance and in its devotion to training and education so that we may be confident there will never, ever be a repeat of the behaviors, the offenses, or the claims that have been associated with this matter.

A priest is ordained with the privilege of celebrating the Church's sacraments by nothing less than a holy order. The behaviors attributable to certain priests involved in this matter not only betray those holy orders, but diminish the stature of the faithful and responsible priests who dispatch their ministry effectively and faithfully day in, day out. For that reason, although the statute of limitations prevents man's law from moving forward with any criminal proceedings here, I—as bishop of this diocese—will present to the Diocesan Tribunal and ultimately to the Vatican the recommendation that these priests see their holy orders removed from them. In the church's vernacular, this is called laicization.

For the victims involved in these cases, this moment certainly represents a significant catharsis. But I do not wish to speak for the victims. For the diocese, this moment represents a significant moment of sadness. For all of us, though, I hope this moment can represent a new beginning that starts first and foremost with the highest devotion to healing.

Although we may apologize for any responsibility the diocese might have had for its insensitivity to conditions that may have created the opportunity for these incidents, we cannot change what may have happened in the past. Nor, I must add, should we ever forget it.

We must today devote ourselves to the present, to our continued concentration on right-shaping and formation of our church leaders, our teachers, and our volunteers regarding the safety of those who are vulnerable and, of course, respect for all of humanity. We must resist the temptation to be either defensive or accusatory, but should instead strive to the higher pur-

poses and good enabled by compassion and forgiveness. We must not stigmatize victims as we endeavor to bring about justice against perpetrators. We must get on with our lives without being infected by the poison of resentment or regret.

As bishop of this diocese, I pledge my commitment to our parishes and our community encircling those parishes that we will and can recover from these dark moments of our history, that the light of God can prevent such darkness from ever eclipsing us again, and that the church will remain an inviolate sanctuary for healing, for spiritual renewal, and for love.

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