



**STATEMENT OF ARCHBISHOP JOHN G. VLAZNY
ON
DISCLOSURE OF DOCUMENTS**

April 15, 2008

In April 2007 I said that the Archdiocese of Portland would release “relevant and appropriate documents” concerning accused priests as “part of the healing process and in the interest of transparency.” Today I continue to fulfill that promise and announce the release of approximately 2000 additional documents by the Archdiocese. This release supplements the almost 400 documents previously released by the Archdiocese of Portland in June 2007.

Some may ask why I am authorizing the release of documents, including confidential personnel records. Who among us, whether a teacher, bus driver, construction worker or lawyer, would want his or her personnel records released to the public?

History has shown that, unfortunately, some priests of the Archdiocese of Portland engaged in shameful conduct with minors. Almost all of the incidents of which we are aware occurred during the period 1940 through the mid 1980’s. Much of this misconduct did not come to light until recently with the lawsuits and claims filed over the last few years. In some cases, we can see in hindsight that what was done or not done by the Archdiocese in decades past was not what we would do now. In hindsight, it may have been insufficient to prevent crimes involving minors from happening. Whether other institutions or the public may learn anything from the files of these priests is open to debate, but I am authorizing a release of these records in the hope that it may aid the healing and reconciliation of anyone who was harmed.

There are some files I am not releasing. Let me explain why. The bankruptcy process brought out numerous claims. In many instances, only one claim was ever received against a priest. Under the process we followed for the resolution of the bankruptcy, many claimants received payment even though their claim could not be verified or substantiated because of the age of the claim, unavailability of witnesses, lack of investigation or other factors. In justice and good conscience I cannot authorize the release the files of persons who were the subject of such claims, about which we typically knew very little. This is especially true when the claim received was the first notice to the Archdiocese of an accusation of misconduct and the accused was dead. The release of personnel files in such uncertain circumstances would serve no proper goal.

In addition, the Archdiocese of Portland released substantial information about the claims at the conclusion of its bankruptcy in a special edition of the *Catholic Sentinel* dated April 27, 2007. The names of the priests who had multiple claims made against them were listed, as were the numbers of settlements and settlement value ranges. Hundreds of documents concerning these priests and the accusations against them have already been released by the Archdiocese or otherwise made available to the public.

Other documents are not being released because living priests (or former priests) object to further disclosure of documents from their files. These men have their own attorneys and I respect their right to address their concerns with the court when public disclosure of their personnel and other files is at issue. Similarly, some files present issues of victim confidentiality.

We had hoped the Archdiocese long before now would have reached an agreement with the plaintiffs' lawyers involved in discussions about what documents should or should not be released. For various reasons, an agreement was not reached. Nonetheless, as the process continues, we are moving forward and releasing this group of documents. The plaintiffs' lawyers may criticize us, as they have often done, and make accusations about the Archdiocese of Portland, the Roman Catholic Church, its clergy, and its parishioners. We will not falter in the face of these accusations. We have made what we believe is a fair decision on document disclosure based on sound guiding principles and will continue on this course.

I know that many are still in need of healing from abuse they suffered years ago. I am relying on pastors and parishioners to join me in making efforts to work for healing and to make those who have been injured as a result of the abuse feel welcome back in our communities. We hope that the continuing release of documents in the spirit of healing and reconciliation will help bring peace to the lives of those who have been harmed.

Today the Archdiocese of Portland has comprehensive child protection policies and programs. It has an Office of Child Protection which coordinates safe environment education for employees, volunteers, parents and children. Parishes and schools throughout the Archdiocese are implementing the nationally recognized *Called to Protect* safe environment program and ensuring that those who work with minors are appropriately screened. The Archdiocese has successfully passed four independent audits for full compliance with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*. The commitment of the church in Western Oregon to the safety of children is and will remain a high priority.