

APOLOGY OF ARCHBISHOP REMBERT G. WEAKLAND, O.S.B.

MAY 31, 2002

Dear Friends in Christ,

I come before you today to apologize and beg forgiveness.

I know—and I am sure you do too—that the Church to be authentic must be a community that heals. But I also know—and you do too—that there is no healing unless it is based on truth. In my remarks I will do my best.

I apologize to all the faithful of this Archdiocese which I love so much, to all its people and clergy, for the scandal that has occurred because of my sinfulness. Long ago, I placed that sinfulness in God's loving and forgiving heart, but now and into the future I worry about those whose faith may be shaken by my acts.

The early Church was wise to declare that God can use imperfect instruments to build the Kingdom and that the effectiveness of the sacraments does not depend on the holiness of the minister. For me that thought brings some, though meager, consolation. It does not in any way diminish my need to beg forgiveness of all of you.

I acknowledge and fully accept my responsibility for the inappropriate nature of my relationship with Mr. Paul Marcoux. I apologize for any harm done him. At that time, 1979, I did not understand that responsibility in the same way as I do now. I have come to see and understand the way in which the power of the Roman collar can work in such relationships and, even more so, a bishop's miter.

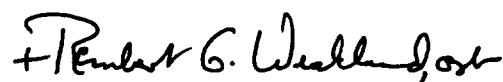
There is an understandable concern about the money paid out in the settlement agreement of 1998. I understood the settlement agreement in question as compensation for Paul Marcoux because of the claim that I had interfered with his ability to earn income. Rather than spend the money litigating this claim, I agreed to an out-of-court settlement. In hindsight I can see why it has the appearance of "hush-money." Perhaps I should have handled this situation differently. If I had done so, there would still have been sizeable costs to the Church, but at least it would have been out in the open. One of my fears in not accepting the settlement was the prospect of scandal and embarrassment for myself and for the Church. For that lack of courage, I apologize.

This money did not come from the Stewardship Appeal or from any diocesan funds designated for charitable or pastoral work. In my mind, the money I had given the Archdiocese was more than the settlement amount. To my continued embarrassment, I now am told that is not true. In my remaining years I will continue to contribute to the Archdiocese whatever I can and, of course, the Archdiocese will receive whatever effects I own on my death.

People who are concerned about me ask how I feel at this moment. The best nouns to describe those feelings would be: remorse, contrition, shame, and emptiness. This final word reminds me of an insight from St. Therese of Lisieux. She once wrote that she wanted to go to God empty-handed. I think I know now personally what she meant by that phrase. I have learned how frail my own human nature is, how in need of God's loving embrace I am. Empty-handed for me now means a willingness to accept my humanity totally, just as Christ accepted that same human nature out of love. But for me it also means to be fully receptive to whatever God wants to place in those hands, to be ready with empty hands to receive new life.

But I am also aware much self-pity and pride remain. I must leave that pride behind. Each day I will try to leave room for God to enter into my life more and more. Ultimately I understand that the humanity God so loved and sought to redeem, including my own humanity, will be transformed by his loving embrace and grace.

Again I apologize to all of you. You have been so extraordinarily loving and caring to me during these years and now during this crisis for me and for you. I want to take this occasion to say how very grateful I am to all of you for the zeal and vitality of faith you have demonstrated during the time I have been privileged to minister here. I also thank the groups of professionals who have contributed their skills and insights to that vitality. I thank all of you for the wonderful support shown me through the years and at this moment. In the future I count on your prayers as I hope for your forgiveness.



Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland, O.S.B.