



“Doing the Truth in Love” (Eph 4:15)
A LETTER TO THE CATHOLICS OF SOUTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

June 13, 2002

Dear Friends:

At this moment in history we as a Church are simultaneously confronted by several very serious issues. The tragedy of sexual abuse of minors and the way these matters have been treated by the Church at times over the years haunts us. The cry of all those directly or indirectly wounded by that crime echoes across our community and our nation. This crisis clearly must be addressed by all of us with a commitment to truth, accountability, and compassion demanded by the Gospel we try to live and preach.

At the very same time we are faced with the emotional impact of the Archbishop's public apology for his own actions twenty years ago, and the further account of the legal settlement made in 1998.

Here is more information regarding that settlement from my perspective. The settlement as I understood it then and now was:

- An effort to bring closure to the allegation of Mr. Marcoux that the Archbishop had interfered with his ability to promote the production of his “Christo-dramas” in various diocesan locations throughout the country. (The issue of the relationship was also in the background at the time.)
- An effort to resolve any litigation and disputes before the expenditure of attorney fees and costs, and attendant risk, that could well have exceeded the settlement amount.
- Acceptance of a lawsuit would have occasioned endless, expensive discovery and depositions.

The question of a scandal was present, undoubtedly, but the greater concern for me at the time was the preservation of the resources of the Archdiocese for the work of the Gospel and the needy. That was the way I saw it. Others may have a different judgment in the matter, but the legal and moral counsel I received led me to concur with the decision to enter that settlement agreement.

Settlements of this nature use confidentiality to bring closure for all parties. In this case I judged that it also protected any rights of Mr. Marcoux. This is the reality, as I understood it, including the silence and confidentiality provisions contained in the agreement.

The agreement was made within the canonical requirements of Church law.

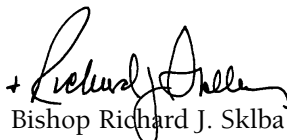
A full report of the origins of the money for the settlement is being prepared for civil authorities as requested. Information about the source of the settlement money is on the archdiocese web site.

Another issue facing us is the need for a new decision structure to provide for further participation of lay leadership. That way the legitimate questions of our people might be structurally addressed, and the confidence of our people might be restored and preserved. Clearly, we have a way to go in this matter. I am deeply sorry for the pain and the public confusion caused by the manner in which we attempted to provide information.

I would certainly welcome any constructive suggestions offered by parishes for ways in which we can move forward toward the healing and the new beginning so deeply needed at this moment in time.

Now we move toward the meeting of bishops in Dallas. Achieving substantial results will be an enormous challenge for all of us. Perhaps the greatest challenge of the conference is to find a way to address multiple voices and expectations.

Please pray for the wisdom and the courage we all need at this moment. Such an action is not an escape from our responsibilities, but recognition of the true source for any effective remedy. Peace.


+ Richard J. Sklba

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