

Press Release 8-11-06

Diocese will not appeal court ruling to release accused priests' personnel files

"A Turning Point in the Journey Toward Healing and Reconciliation" states Bishop Vann

Fort Worth. August 11, 2006 — On July 25th Tarrant County District Judge Len Wade ruled to release portions of the personnel files of seven priests accused of sexual abuse of minors. Today, The Most Rev. Kevin W. Vann, Bishop of the Diocese of Fort Worth announced that the Diocese will not exercise its right to appeal the Order.

"Today is a turning point in the journey toward healing and reconciliation," said Bishop Vann. "What our Church has learned is that we must be ever vigilant and each and every one of us must truly live our faith."

"In reading through these records it is evident to me that as a Church now operating under the Charter's stringent requirements — we could have acted more promptly, forthrightly, and with greater compassion to those who came forward with allegations," stated Bishop Vann.

"I say this not to criticize past decisions in the Diocese but to measure them against the stringent demands of the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People," he added.

The Bishop reiterated his personal and heartfelt apology to those who have suffered sexual abuse.

"It is a sin — and a crime," said Bishop Vann. "In fact, such abuse is doubly painful for those of you who have suffered it. For it not only took your innocence and your childhood; in some cases it destroyed your Faith."

With regard to the release of the personnel files, the Diocese had raised concerns at the outset over the issue of protection of privacy rights for all persons involved.

"However," said Bishop Vann, "On July 25th, Judge Wade sufficiently answered those concerns."

As some cases and the personnel files are pending before the courts, the Bishop emphasized that he is prevented from discussing specific details in the records. However, he made it clear that the decision not to appeal the release of the personnel records represents a turning point for the Diocese of Fort Worth and for the entire community.

"God has given us this opportunity not only to rectify some wrongs but also to do some good," said Bishop Vann.