



NEWS RELEASE

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SACRAMENTO

DIOCESE ASKS CHURCH COURT TO RULE ON DISPUTE WITH DOMINICANS

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SACRAMENTO – The Diocese of Sacramento announced today that it has asked a Church tribunal for a ruling in an on-going dispute with the leadership of the Western Dominican Province concerning responsibility for the actions of Fr. Jerome Henson, a priest of the Dominican Order, who was accused of sexual abuse while serving at St. Dominic’s Church in Benicia in the early 1980’s. Fr. Henson has since left the priesthood.

The Diocese made its announcement in response to recent remarks from the pulpit at St. Dominic’s Church by Fr. Emmerich Vogt, prior provincial of the Western Dominican Province.

As part of a global settlement with abuse victims and their attorneys reached in 2005, the Diocese of Sacramento settled all outstanding claims against the Diocese and religious orders operating within the Diocese, including those against Fr. Henson. More than two years later, the Diocese was partially reimbursed by the Dominican’s insurance carrier for the claims against Fr. Henson, but so far, the Province itself has declined to accept any responsibility for the substantial remaining damages.

“The financial resources of the Diocese ultimately come from the generosity and sacrifice of the Catholic people,” said William K. Weigand, bishop of Sacramento. “As bishop, I have to be a faithful steward of those financial resources. I am just not free to absolve the Dominicans of their full responsibility for the actions of their members.”

“In addition, it’s a matter of fairness,” explained Weigand.

Discussions between the Dominicans and the Diocese of Sacramento have been taking place for more than 3 years in an attempt to reach an agreement. Repeated efforts by the Diocese to resolve the dispute have been unsuccessful, leading the Diocese to seek recourse under Canon (Church) Law.

What is called a “libellus” under Canon law was filed with the Metropolitan Tribunal of the Archdiocese of San Francisco. Proceedings are pending.