

August 15, 2003

His Holiness Benedict XVI
The Vatican
Vatican City State

Your Holiness:

After much prayerful consideration, I now request from you a dispensation from the obligations connected with the priesthood and from celibacy. I ask to be returned to the lay state.

There are many reasons for my request. I now have had concerns about my ability to fulfill all of the obligations of the priesthood.

I have been placed on administrative leave by the Archbishop of Philadelphia for one occasion of sexual misconduct with a minor. I have had to deal with this allegation since 1992. I am now 63 year old. The fact that this sexual misconduct has been brought to the attention of both Church and civil authorities makes it unlikely that I can ever serve in active ministry again. I do not believe that any aspect of the allegation presented by the Church authority is accurate, and I deny any sexual misconduct of any kind with a minor. This same allegation was thoroughly investigated for a period of ten (10) months in 1993 and was declared "unfounded". I was welcomed back to the ministry by Anthony Cardinal Devlin and reassigned to Nazareth Hospital. With the Bishop's new policy of "zero tolerance" the accusation was revisited and I was suspended from ministry in December 5, 2003.

Since I was accused of sexual misconduct, I have had the past twenty (20) months to consider the issues surrounding my reasons for making this request. I was exonerated by the civil authorities of any type of wrongdoing after they had made a thorough investigation. Nonetheless the time away from priestly ministry has assisted me in discerning the fact that the priesthood is not the appropriate calling for me at this time because of the adverse publicity to the Church and myself. I am convinced it will not be in the future.

I have not had a problem with celibacy during the years of my priesthood. A dispensation from the vow of celibacy will assist me in living my life in a way that is appropriate to me. I have every intention of continuing to live a celibate life.

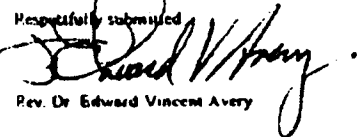
The crisis in which I have found myself during these past months has brought me to a deeper understanding about the concerns I have had about the ability of my vocation to survive this. This request is not a quick solution to a temporary problem. I find no alternative but to request dispensation.

I am fully aware that my decision to return to lay status, if approved by the Holy See, is permanent and final, without hope of eventual re-admittance to priestly ministry.

I am currently in good physical, emotional, and spiritual health. I have had no serious health concerns during my lifetime.

I solemnly swear to the truth of all the above information.

My curriculum vitae is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Edward Vincent Avery

