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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The following is Bishop Skylstad's statement regarding his recollection from 28 years ago when he first was pastor at Assumption Parish, and then the Chancellor for the Spokane Diocese, concerning Pat O'Donnell:

I have searched my memory to reconstruct the events involving Pat O'Donnell that occurred 28 years ago during my brief service at Assumption Parish. While my memory is clouded by the passage of nearly three decades, I have made every effort to recall what happened, to the best of my ability.

I remember receiving two complaints from parents regarding Pat O'Donnell. While I don't recall the name of the parents or the exact time of the complaints, I do remember that, in one case, parents objected to O'Donnell having the children of the parish school box in gym class because one child had suffered a bloody nose. The second complaint was in late 1975 or early 1976 from a parent or parents who complained about O'Donnell having adolescent males in the school gym wash their private parts.

I reported this to then Bishop Bernard Topel who advised me to counsel and remonstrate O'Donnell that this was not appropriate, which I did. Sometime later, I was transferred from Assumption Parish to the Chancery to be the Diocesan Chancellor. Msgr. John Donnelly replaced me as pastor at Assumption Parish.

The next complaint I recall about O'Donnell came when I was Chancellor of the diocese working for Bishop Topel. I remember that Msgr. Donnelly reported to Bishop Topel the abuse of an adolescent male by O'Donnell, but I don't recall if the complaint was made to me directly or if I was made aware of the complaint by Bishop Topel. I do remember that, shortly thereafter, Bishop Topel confronted O'Donnell about the allegation, suspended him, and sent him to Seattle to undergo therapy and counseling with a psychologist. At the time this occurred, in June of 1976, the bishops believed – as did the mental health professionals that were advising them – that sexually deviant behavior of this nature was a curable disease and that treatment should be prescribed.

I don't recall, nor do I believe, that Bishop Topel ever informed me of any sexual behavioral problems with Pat O'Donnell before the incidents which I have described.

I wish I could recall more clearly conversations and events that happened three decades ago. I am deeply sorry that I cannot. Unfortunately, many of the conversations said to have occurred so long ago involve people who are now deceased and are not here to corroborate what was said or reported. I realize the profound pain and damage the victims and their families have suffered. Words cannot express the depth of my sorrow for what happened to the Corrigan family, yet in a phone call and a letter, I have attempted to let them know what is in my heart.

On behalf of the Church, I have repeatedly apologized to them and all the victims of abusive priests, and I do so here again.