



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wednesday, September 27, 2017**

**Statement from Bishop Michael Hoepfner re: Settlement Agreement with Mr. Ronald Vasek**

As you are probably aware, earlier this year, Mr. Ronald Vasek brought a lawsuit against me and the Diocese of Crookston. Mr. Vasek's lawsuit claimed Monsignor Roger Grundhaus made a sexual advance toward him in 1971 when Mr. Vasek was about 16 years old. He alleges that I tried to keep this claim quiet after he and I visited about the alleged incident in 2011. Mr. Vasek and I have reached a settlement agreement regarding his claims against me. The agreement states that there is no admission of unlawful conduct or wrongdoing on my part. The settlement avoids costly attorney fees and a drawn out legal process. No diocesan funds were used to pay the settlement as the diocesan insurance provider covered the claims. The Diocese of Crookston has sought a dismissal of the remaining claims against it related to this matter and awaits a ruling.

I want to emphasize again that I did not pressure Mr. Vasek to remain quiet when we met in 2011 or when we met again in 2015. Mr. Vasek had indicated to me that he wanted the alleged incident to remain confidential. I attempted to abide by his wishes.

I was willing to ordain Mr. Vasek as a permanent deacon. He attended the final deacon formation weekend in late April, along with the other deacon candidates. Mr. Vasek chose not to be ordained for diaconal ministry. I respect his decision.

Looking back and knowing what I do now, I believe I would have handled my conversations with Mr. Vasek differently. However, please know that I did not pressure Mr. Vasek into making any decision with which he was not comfortable.

The Diocese of Crookston takes all matters of clergy sexual misconduct seriously. Monsignor Grundhaus remains on leave from public ministry. I, along with diocesan leaders, clergy, parish and Catholic school staff and volunteers remain diligent in our work to provide a safe environment for all people, especially young people.

I continue to pray for all those involved in this matter. No one should ever be subject to inappropriate sexual conduct. I ask all Catholics and people of good will to pray for healing for all those who have suffered abuse.