

Archbishop's retirement tainted by scandal

By Jerry Filteau
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Pope John Paul II accepted Milwaukee Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland's resignation May 24, the day after the archbishop was publicly accused of making an unwanted sexual advance on a man more than 20 years ago.

Archbishop Weakland acknowledged a 1998 monetary settlement with the man but said, "I have never abused anyone." He had submitted his resignation on his 75th birthday, April 2, and asked the Vatican May 23 to "accelerate its acceptance."

Bishop Wilton D. Gregory of Belleville, Ill., president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, expressed "deepest sympathy to the people of the archdiocese."

"I am deeply saddened by the news. ... It comes at a time when the church in our country is suffering greatly from what seems to be an unending series of revelations and accusations," Bishop Gregory said.

The official Vatican announcement made no reference to the scandal, but cited Canon 401.1 of church law, referring to the fact that the archbishop had reached the retirement age of 75. No successor was named immediately.

Pope John Paul was traveling in Bulgaria May 23-26 when the news broke.

Reporters traveling with the pope asked Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls May 24 what the pope's reaction was.

"He has expressed so clearly his views on this topic that he did not give a specific comment," Navarro-Valls answered.



Archbishop Rembert G. Weakland

The Vatican action was precipitated when Paul Marcoux (pronounced mar-COO) said on ABC's "Good Morning America" show May 23 that he received a \$450,000 settlement from the archbishop in 1998 for an incident when he was in his early 30s and a graduate student at Marquette University.

Marcoux said that when he visited Archbishop Weakland to discuss studying for the priesthood, the archbishop "started to try and kiss me and continued to force himself on me, pull down my trousers and attempted to fondle me."

In a one-page statement opening with the words, "I have never abused anyone," Archbishop Weakland said, "I have not seen Paul Marcoux for more than 20 years ... (when) he was a man in his early 30s."

Referring to the settlement, he said, "Because I accept the agreement's confidentiality provision, I will make no comment about its contents."

He added that in 25 years as archbishop of Milwaukee, "I have handed over to the archdiocese money obtained by my lectures and writings, together with other honoraria. Cumulatively, those monies far exceed any settlement amount."

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported details of Marcoux's story on its Web site May 23 and posted the texts of the settlement.

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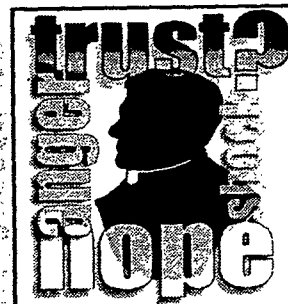
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The victim inside the victim

In April 2000, Dr. Stephen Pack, a Bronx emergency-room doctor, repeatedly stabbed a pediatric nurse with a syringe of an abortion-inducing drug in an attempt to kill her 2-month-old unborn child, whom he had fathered.

Eventually charged with assault against the mother, Pack was not charged with killing his intended victim — the baby — because under New York law, a baby is not a person unless it has been born alive.

Some state initiatives depart from that position, however. According to New York's Uniform Anatomical Gifts Act, for example, the parents of an unborn child that died in utero may donate the child's organs on the child's behalf.

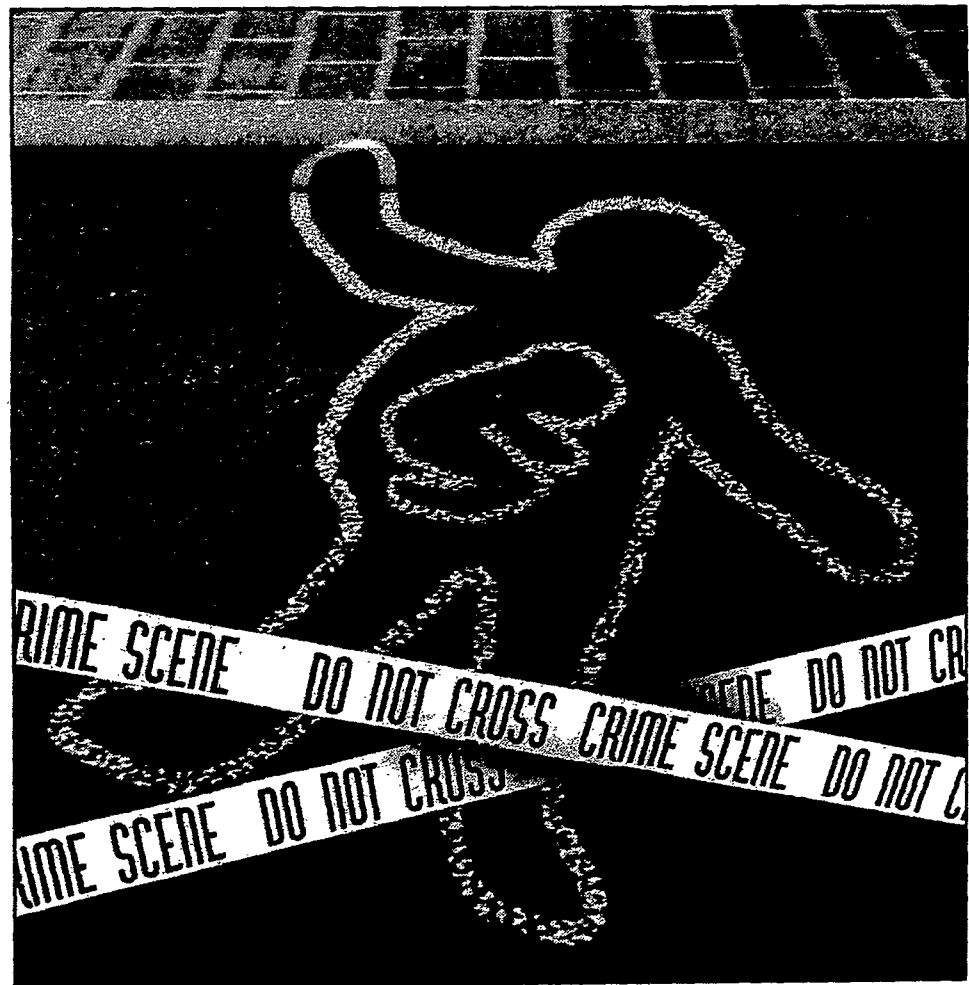
An unborn child is also counted as a person if its mother enrolls in Child Health Plus, New York's health-insurance plan for low-income families. "Pregnant women count as two when determining family size," states the New York Department of Health's Web site section on Child Health Plus.

And if a woman has been pregnant for more than 24 weeks and is assaulted or murdered, an assailant may be charged with murdering the baby as well, as long as the baby was born alive before dying. This happened, for example, in a 1998 case in Troy when an assault victim's baby girl was delivered via emergency Caesarean section and then died from injuries suffered from the assault on its mother.

Thus pro-life advocates assert that the state government frequently does have reason to consider an unborn child just that — a child, not a "pregnancy." And they are pushing the state to establish a law that would charge assailants of pregnant women with two crimes, one against the mother and one against the child.

On May 15, the State Senate voted 40-19 to pass the Unborn Victims of Violence Act (S.57-B). This legislation states that when an unborn child is killed or injured during the commission of a violent crime against the child's mother, the assailant can be charged for crimes against both mother and child.

Jann Armantrout, life issues coordinator for the Diocese of Rochester's office of Catholic Charities, applauded the Senate



vote. Although it does not change abortion laws, she said the vote does serve to enshrine respect for women who choose to have children. She added that it is ironic that in a day and age when some couples spend thousands of dollars on fertility treatments to have children, drunk drivers and other assailants can take the lives of unborn children and not be held responsible for the babies' deaths.

Among the bill's supporters is the New York State Catholic Conference, which represents the state's bishops in matters of public policy. After the Senate vote, Kathleen Gallagher, the conference's associate director, made the following statement:

"By passing this legislation, the Senate is

attempting to correct a serious injustice in our criminal justice system. When a woman who has chosen to bring her baby to term has that choice seized from her by an outside aggressor, then justice must be served. In such cases, there are clearly two victims — the mother who is assaulted and the unborn child who will never have the chance to be held in her mother's arms because of a criminal act.

"It is our hope that the Assembly will pass their version of the bill (A.9908), sponsored by Assemblyman Peter Rivera (D-Bronx), and send the Unborn Victims of Violence Act to Governor (George) Pataki for his signature."

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