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Ananova :

Bishop who admits sexual misconduct with teenager offers resignation

A Roman Catholic bishop in America has offered to resign after acknowledging he inappropriately touched a teenager more than 25 years ago.

Reverend O'Connell offered his resignation to the Pope's top representative in the United States.

As in the case of all offers by bishops to resign, the decision to accept or reject the request will be up to Pope John Paul II.

The Vatican's press office said it would publish the pope's decision once it's is made. The office did not say how soon that might be.

"I am truly deeply sorry for the pain, hurt, anger and confusion I have caused," the Reverend Anthony J. O'Connell, bishop of the Diocese of Palm Beach. "I've been loved since I entered this diocese, far more than anyone should be loved."

Bishop O'Connell admitted to the allegations made by Christopher Dixon, his former student at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Hannibal, Missouri, where he was serving as rector at the time.

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Mr Dixon said the two touched inappropriately in bed after he sought out Reverend O'Connell for counseling. He said the abuse began in 1977, when he was 15, and continued until 1980.

"I was as wrong as could be in taking that kind of approach and I'm so sorry," the bishop said. "There was nothing in the relationship that was anything other than touches."

Asked if he had been involved with any others, Reverend O'Connell said there could be "one other person of a somewhat similar situation, in a somewhat similar time frame." He would not elaborate.

Story filed: 16:22 Saturday 9th March 2002

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