

## *Protection of Children and Young People*

Annual Report From Archbishop Jerome Hanus, O.S.B.

January 1 - December 31, 2006

Dear Members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque,

It has been almost five years since the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops met in Dallas, Texas, to address the issue of clergy sexual abuse of minors. Out of that meeting came the framework for all dioceses throughout the United States to develop programs to reach out to victims of clergy sexual abuse and also to provide a safe environment for all God's children. The *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* included four main goals to guide our programs:

1. To Promote Healing and Reconciliation With Victims/Survivors of Sexual Abuse of Minors.
2. To Guarantee an Effective Response to Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors.
3. To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures.
4. To Protect the Faithful in the Future.

Each year I have written a report sharing with you our continuing efforts to achieve these goals. The first three reports can be found on the Archdiocesan Web site ([www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us](http://www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us)).

### **To Promote Healing and Reconciliation**

In order to promote healing and reconciliation for victims of clergy sexual abuse, it is important that our programs are easy to access. To accomplish this, large posters are displayed in churches, schools, and buildings throughout the Archdiocese. These posters make known our program and provide the names and contact numbers of Victim Assistance Coordinators (VACs), who will receive the victim's call and direct the allegation to appropriate law enforcement officials and to the Office for the Protection of Children for follow-up. VACs are not employees of the Archdiocese; their services are contracted. Currently we have two VACs—Thomas Anderegg, Ph.D. (563-556-1225) and Joan Hoffmann (1-866-319-4636). Paid advertisements appear in the major secular newspapers throughout the Archdiocese as well as in *The Witness*, our Catholic newspaper. Information on how to report abuse is also listed on our Web site.

Our records show that during calendar year 2006, fifteen additional victims came forward with allegations of sexual abuse as minors by clergy. These allegations were handled according to the procedures of the *Charter* and the Archdiocesan *Policy for the Protection of Minors*.

In responding to victims, a monetary settlement may be sought as a response to the injury suffered through the abuse. During the past year, the Archdiocese reached settlement agreements with several victims of clergy sexual abuse. Most of these agreements were reached by means of an out-of-court mediation in February 2006. Twenty victims were involved in that action. The

details of the mediation were publicized widely at that time. In addition to the twenty victims involved in that mediation, another six victims reached agreement with the Archdiocese during 2006. The monetary compensation for those six victims totaled \$414,000.

Besides those settlements, the 2006 financial outlay made by the Archdiocese in connection with the sexual abuse of minors by Church personnel is as follows:

\$255,885	Psychological evaluations, legal and other professional services.
\$ 33,410	Victim aid (counseling, medication, and other assistance).
\$ 76,800	Other child protection expenses ( <i>Virtus</i> contract, audit, training, conferences, travel, etc.).

### **To Guarantee an Effective Response**

It is difficult for victims to come forward and report abuse. Therefore, it is important that when they find the courage to do so, they get an effective response. The trained Victim Assistance Coordinator (VAC) who receives the call will listen to the victim with courtesy and respect. The VAC will offer the victim a personal visit with me. If this offer is accepted, I contact the victim and listen to his or her story. This gives me the opportunity to apologize on behalf of the Church for the abuse suffered.

During 2006, I and other staff members of the Archdiocese spent dozens and dozens of hours listening to victims, learning from them, and trying to help them. The VAC will also offer to arrange for a spiritual advisor for victims and provide them with media materials dealing with sexual abuse if they express interest. Payment for counseling and medication can be offered if victims feel this could be helpful to their situation. Each victim has the opportunity to review the VAC's written summary of the report before it is sent to the Office for the Protection of Children for follow-up. This assures the victim that the report is accurate. All victim reports are reviewed by the Archdiocesan Review Board, the Archbishop, and the Vicar General. If the alleged abuser is still living and hasn't been removed from service, an outside professional is hired to conduct an investigation. The results of the investigation are reviewed by the Review Board, which makes recommendations for follow-up.

All victims have the right and are encouraged to report or to have their allegation reported to civil authorities as well as Church authorities. The VAC informs victims of this right and helps them accomplish this, if that is their desire.

### **To Ensure the Accountability of Our Procedures**

The *Charter* set up several structures and procedures which are intended to give an account of how we are dealing with clergy sexual abuse of minors. These include a national review board, a national office for child and youth protection, and national public reports each year.

On the local level, this Annual Report to the People is one way to be open and transparent and to assure the wider public that the victims have not been forgotten.

The Archdiocesan Review Board meets several times a year. The Board consists of twelve individuals from throughout the Archdiocese who represent a multitude of disciplines. A list of current Board members can be found on our Web site. The role of the Review Board is to develop policy, review all reported allegations of clergy sexual abuse of minors, and advise the Archdiocese in responding to the allegations of sexual abuse of minors. The Board also monitors the *Policy for the Protection of Minors* to assure that it is being followed.

Audits by independent outside professionals are another means to ensure accountability. The Gavin Group from Boston conducts audits in all dioceses throughout the United States to verify compliance with the national *Charter* and *Essential Norms*. The results of these audits are published on the United States Bishops' Web site ([www.usccb.org](http://www.usccb.org)) and also on our Web site ([www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us](http://www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us)). The Archdiocese of Dubuque has been in full compliance for each audit. Our next on-site audit is scheduled for the fall of 2007.

### **To Protect the Faithful in the Future**

The final leg of the *Charter* deals with “safe environments” and background checks. As a condition for work in the Archdiocese of Dubuque, all employees (including priests, deacons, and seminarians) and volunteers who spend at least one hour a week with children are required to have a background check. They must also study our policies on standards of conduct and sign a form indicating their agreement to conduct themselves accordingly. These employees and volunteers are also required to attend a three-hour training entitled *Virtus* that provides factual information about sexual abuse of minors and what to do if they suspect a minor is being abused. Since instituting this requirement, the Archdiocese has conducted background checks on 10,388 employees and volunteers and educated 12,482 individuals through the *Virtus* training program.

Although background checks and training sessions don't guarantee that abuse will never occur, it provides a clear signal to all adults who work or volunteer in the Archdiocese that we take the role of protecting children very seriously.

The *Charter* also addressed screening and formation of candidates for the priesthood. During 2006, St. Pius X Seminary in Dubuque participated in the Apostolic Visitation conducted by the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education.

### **Renewed Apology**

In the name of the entire Archdiocese, I again express my profound sorrow for what victims have endured. It is my hope that the support and understanding that have been offered to victims will give them a sense of affirmation and validation.

Some members of the Church and of the wider public have doubts and objections in regard to the allegations and the monetary settlements. I urge all to be understanding and sympathetic. The abuse perpetrated by Church personnel was awful and cries to heaven for vengeance. I grieve particularly for the victims whose faith in God has been weakened or destroyed by the abuse. I hope and pray that trust in the Church may not be lost forever.

In closing, I ask all parishes to continue to include victims and survivors of sexual abuse in their prayers. May God grant us an increase in compassion, understanding, and resolve.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Rev. Jerome Hanus, O.S.B.  
Archbishop of Dubuque